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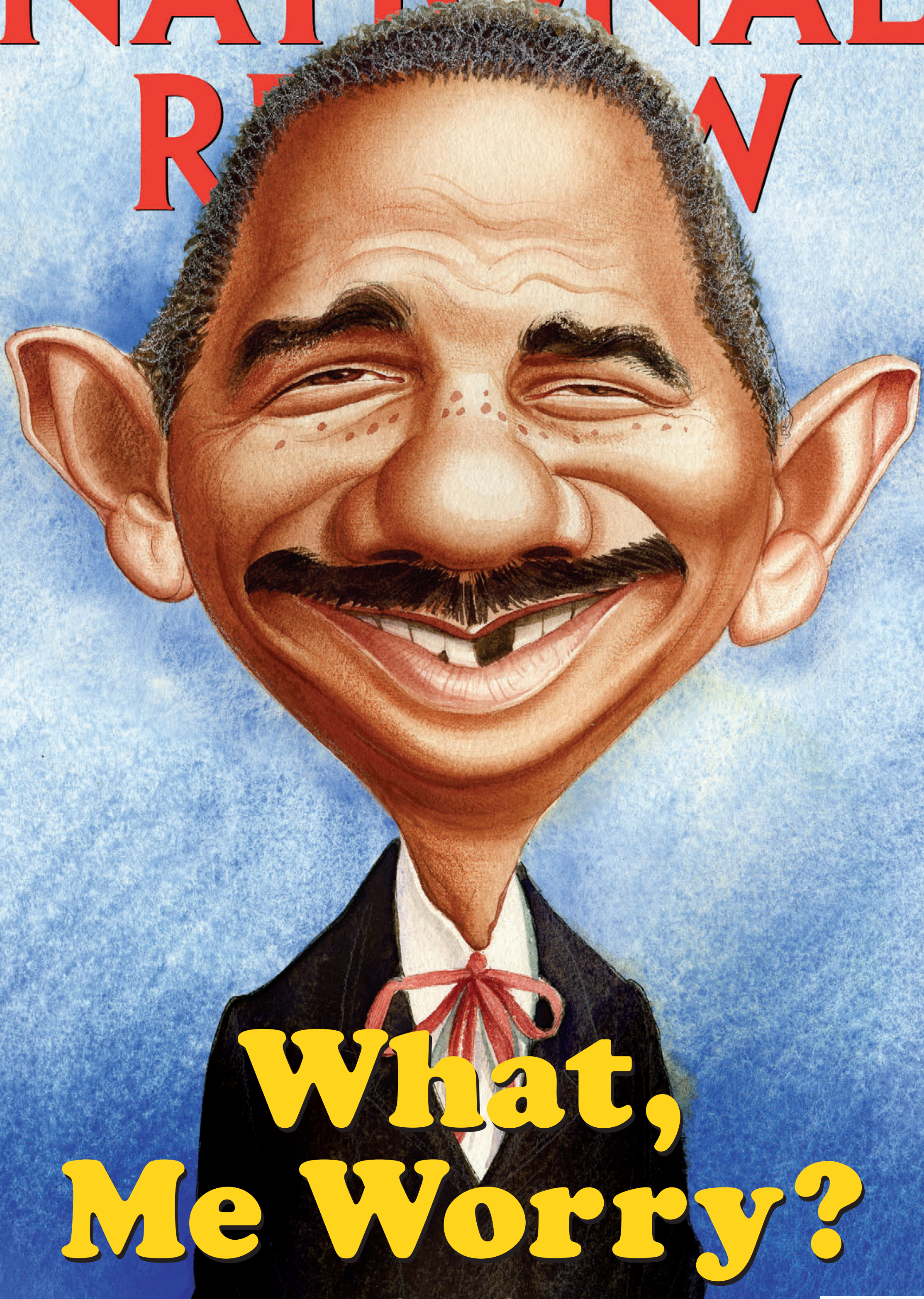
JOHN O'SULLIVAN: SARAH PALIN—ONE OF US

NATIONAL REVIEW



What, Me Worry?

ANDREW C. McCARTHY ON ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER

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a) oil

b) natural gas

c) wind

d) solar

e) biofuels

f) energy efficiency

✓g) all of the above

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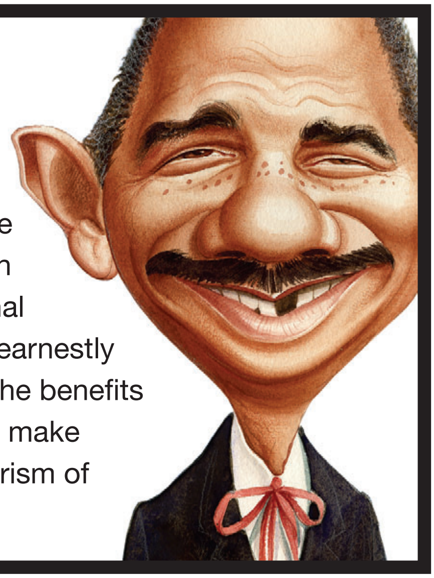
Shifty Shifting

Eric Holder is a sharp-elbowed political animal and an inveterate careerist. He is also a member in good standing of the international Left's legal vanguard. However earnestly delivered, his assertions about the benefits of civilian trials for war criminals make logical sense only through the prism of politics. *Andrew C. McCarthy*



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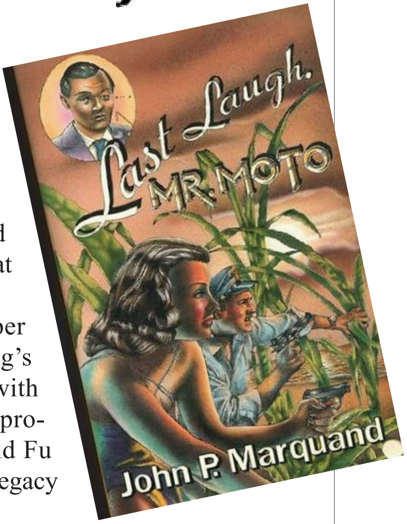
Letters

The Talented Mr. Moto



Terry Teachout should be sorry! How can he discuss John P. Marquand and his works ("Be Careful What You Ask For," November 23) without any mention of Marquand's most significant and lasting body of work, the Mr. Moto spy series? If Teachout wants to resuscitate Marquand's writing legacy and expose a new generation to his works, he should at least mention the wonderful world of Mr. Moto.

Marquand's pre–World War II polite and proper Imperial Japanese superspy predates Ian Fleming's James Bond by nearly a generation. I fell in love with Moto as a result of a 1980s series reissue. While protagonists like Sherlock Holmes, James Bond, and Fu Manchu may be more famous, Marquand's lasting legacy to readers is his memorably modest Mr. Moto.

Michael Frost
Glenwood, Iowa

Partners in Redistribution

Stephen Spruiell's excellent article in the November 23 issue, "Unholy Union," neglected to mention what I believe is the most important reason that Andy Stern has been the White House's most frequent visitor. Hearken back to Candidate Obama's offhand remark to Joe the Plumber that he just wanted to "spread the wealth around." Now cut to a recent Fox News interview with Stern wherein the union leader flatly stated that one of his principal goals has always been, and remains, the redistribution of wealth in America.

There you go. Stern's not there proselytizing; he's just visiting with a kindred spirit.

Thomas M. Sullivan, Esq.
Lake George, N.Y.

Executive Operation

Charles Krauthammer is my hero; he is truly amazing. And while I agree that he is President Obama's critic-in-chief, as your November 23 cover put it, I believe that the deft way in which he dissects the president's arguments, policies, and proposals could also earn him the title of surgeon general. Mr. Krauthammer delivers his opinions with such finesse that I often wonder whether President Obama even feels the knife.

Mary E. Wylong
Vero Beach, Fla.

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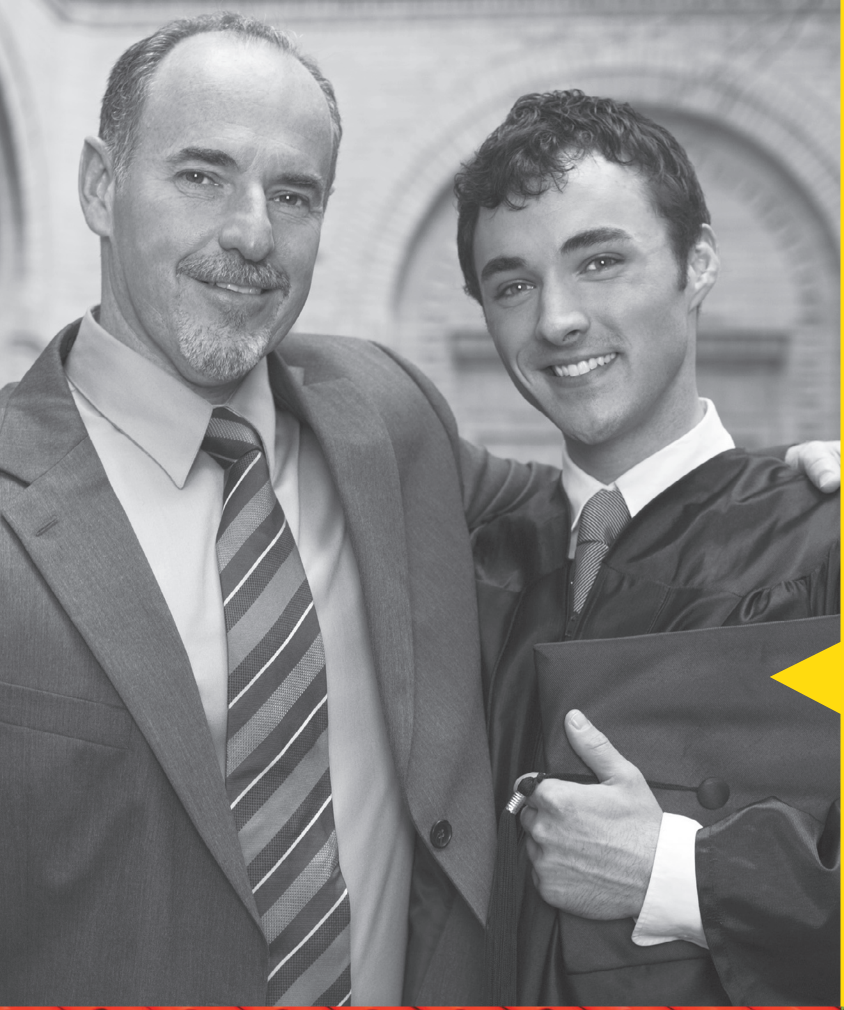

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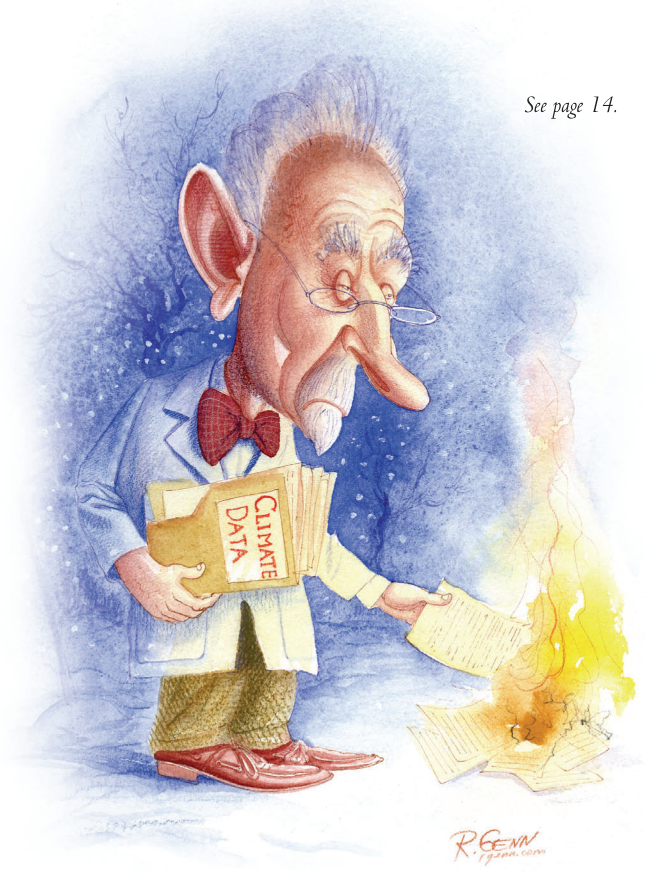
The Week

■ Tiger is probably glad he didn't give his wife any pointers on how to swing a 9-iron.

■ On a party-line vote, the Senate decided to start debating Harry Reid's health-care bill. It has all the essential features of the Democratic bills that came before it: fines on Americans who do not purchase the required type of insurance policies; big unfunded mandates for state governments; a new government-run insurance program; huge increases in spending financed partly by imaginary future cuts to entitlement spending and partly by real cuts in the most market-oriented segments of federal health-care programs. What Reid has added is a new increase in Medicare taxes. Several of the senators who voted to proceed to debate indicated reservations about the bill. The polls show rather stronger opposition on the part of the public. Republicans should call for starting over. They should also put the Democrats on notice that if this monstrosity passes they will campaign for its repeal in the next election, and the one after that.

■ Liberals are pushing for a temporary surtax on the rich to fund the war in Afghanistan—and it is only to spare our readers eyestrain that we have omitted quotation marks around most of those qualifiers to indicate our disbelief. Keep in mind that we are still paying telephone taxes that were introduced as a temporary measure to get the rich to pay for the Spanish–American War. We should fund the wars by cutting domestic spending. Raising taxes on a weak economy would be masochism masquerading as virtue.

■ His stimulus spend-a-palooza having failed, spectacularly, to produce the promised jobs—he has spent us to a 10.2 percent national unemployment rate, and remains disinclined to put away the taxpayer pocketbook—President Obama has convened a "jobs summit" to study the question. Government performs some useful functions, but it is by nature an economic parasite and cannot cause productive jobs to condense out of the vapors. There is a limited number of tools it can employ to encourage economic productivity—the real source of jobs and of wage growth—but the president and his coterie are not enthusiastic about them: reducing taxes on capital, on investment, on profits, and on labor. If businesses have to spend $1.40 to get $1 worth of labor, they will employ fewer workers and will do so at lower wages. The president seems incapable of considering any plan of economic action that does not allow him to play the savior.



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ROMAN GENN

■ Plumbing uncharted personal depths, Obama dipped below 50 percent approval in a Gallup poll for the first time. He stood at 44 percent among independents in the late-November poll and at 39 percent among whites (his numbers among minorities are still sky-high). He dropped below 50 percent with every age group except the young, who apparently relish the idea of paying off debt for the rest of their working lives. Obama has clearly paid a price for the cataract of government spending he has unleashed. In another Gallup poll, a majority said for the first time that his policies have been "mostly liberal." Obama's approval rating matters because it determines how much clout he has on Capitol Hill and how steep an uphill climb congressional Democrats will have in the 2010 elections. Keep sinking, Mr. President.

■ Ronald Reagan is said to have told his staff that "the person who agrees with you 80 percent of the time is a friend and an ally, not a 20 percent traitor." Some conservative activists have decided that it is time to add a corollary to Reagan's dictum: Thirty percent traitors should be run out of the Republican party. These activists have devised a list of ten principles, and want the Republican National Committee to adopt a rule barring party funds from going to any candidate who agrees with fewer than eight of them. We agree with the activists' principles, but not their tactics. The Arlen Specters of the Republican party have been a declining force within it for decades (which helps explain why Specter himself left). They had little to do with the party's recent troubles, and they are not one of the most important obstacles to its resurgence. We have backed conservative primary challengers against the Specters when, in our judgment, doing so would pull Congress to the right. It cannot possibly serve that purpose to adopt a blanket rule that the RNC cannot spend a dollar to replace a Democrat who agrees with us 10 percent of the time with a Republican who agrees with us 60 percent of the time.

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■ That Maurice Clemmons—convicted multiple felon and lone suspect in the ambush and murder of four police officers in suburban Seattle—died a free man is due to a cascade of failures in the criminal justice systems of Washington State (where Clemmons was on bail pending child-rape charges) and Arkansas (where he was wanted as a fugitive). But the process began with former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee, who in 2000 commuted Clemmons's lengthy sentence for burglary and robbery, making the career criminal instantly eligible for parole. As with Wayne DuMond, a convicted rapist who raped and killed a woman just months after Huckabee helped secure his release in 1999, the governor did not offer direct pardons but rather worked directly and indirectly through Arkansas's parole board, buffering himself from popular outrage. DuMond and Clemmons are but two of the 1,033 convicts whom Huckabee granted pardons or commutations during his decade as governor, more than double the clemencies granted by his three most recent predecessors combined. That record surely speaks to the ordained minister's Christian compassion, but it is now tragically clear that it speaks as well to his poor judgment. The power to pardon is perhaps the most formidable the several states grant their executives, and one that requires an equally formidable wisdom to wield.

■ Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D., R.I.) said that the Catholic bishops ought to speed the passage of health-care legislation by dropping their objection to abortion funding. After his bishop, Thomas Tobin of Providence, criticized him in return, Kennedy claimed that the bishop had ordered the priests in his diocese not to give him communion because of his support for abortion. The bishop then clarified that the letter he sent Kennedy in early

The Metamorphosis

If Franz Kafka were writing today, Gregor Samsa, the unfortunate man who awoke to find himself metamorphosed into a cockroach, would find instead that he had been awarded a job in Delaware's 15,934th congressional district.

The White House has justly received ample negative publicity from the verifiably false claims of jobs "created or saved" in districts that do not exist. But one important aspect of the data deception has gone unnoticed.

Here is how it works. In order to gather data that can be used by the president to score political points, firms that receive stimulus dollars have to report back to the government how many jobs were created. It is hard to imagine a more coercive, sinister, and absurd system for collecting data. If a firm reports back that it has not created many jobs, then it might reasonably expect to be a low priority for future funds. If it reports that it has created a glorious number of jobs, then it might reasonably expect more handouts in the future.

Thus, the reported jobs numbers might be expected to be much higher than the real ones. There is a second problem as well. Obama-supporting businessmen might be tempted to assert that they have created a miraculous number of jobs, in order to convert more voters to the view that Obama is "the One." Conversely, Obama's opponents might want to lowball the number, although they would likely be disciplined by the realization that a low number would reduce the likelihood of receiving more funds in the future.

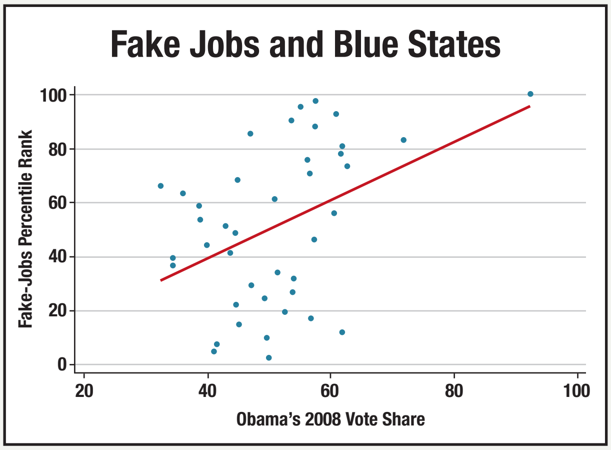
If the data collected from these forms were "unbiased," then the errors in the data should be white noise, unrelated to any other variable. If the data are reported by individuals who are biased, then the errors should be correlated with political affiliation. The nearby chart reveals just such a bias.

The chart ranks the states by percentile according to the number of fake jobs "created" per capita, then compares these rankings with the percentage of state voters who went for Obama in 2008. The regression line through the data reveals the basic tendency of this relationship. That the line is upward sloping and statistically significant is damning evidence that the jobs numbers are politically motivated propaganda. The more pro-Obama a state was in 2008, the higher the number of fake jobs it reported in 2009.

This evidence of political corruption in the data-collection effort is truly scandalous. In the past, presidents of both parties recognized the importance of reliable and professional government statistics. If the Obama team is willing to countenance this scam, who knows where it will end? The person in charge of stimulus-job calculation may soon find himself working at the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the government agency that assembles the national income accounts.

If that happens, you can be sure that the largest measured boom in economic history will soon be in the government data. Of course, if you want to find the boom, you will have to ask Kafka where to find it.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT



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2007 included a request, not an order: “I believe it is inappropriate for you to be receiving Holy Communion and I now ask respectfully that you refrain from doing so.” Public commentary has predictably centered on the alleged church-state issues raised by the bishop’s action. But the bishop is of course not ordering Kennedy to vote a certain way, nor can he. He is explaining the spiritual consequences of certain political decisions, as is his duty. Complicity in injustice—including the denial of legal protection to the unborn—takes a Catholic out of communion with his church. Moved by the same principle, the archbishop of New Orleans in 1962 took the stronger step of formally excommunicating Catholic politicians who supported white supremacy. Meanwhile, everyone is missing the real story. John F. Kennedy, Patrick’s uncle, was elected president nearly 50 years ago. It is not too soon for the bishops to outgrow the family’s mystique.

■ Quit a congressional race, endorse your Democratic opponent, call the cops on a reporter, and you too could be feted by the dons of the political press corps as the next great “moderate” Republican commentator. Dede Scozzafava, the liberal GOP nominee in November’s special election in New York’s 23rd congressional district, did all of the above and now finds herself a media star. While Doug Hoffman, the Conservative-party challenger, licks his wounds upstate, and new Democratic representative Bill Owens garners little attention in Congress, Scozzafava has appeared on CBS’s *Face the Nation*, CNN’s *American Morning*, and many other programs. The interviews follow a similar script: Reporter grimaces, dips head, worries about the GOP’s “purge” of centrists. Scozzafava agrees. More knowing nods. MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow went so far as to apologize to Scozzafava for all of the “mean, personal things” said about her by talk-radio hosts. “Hopefully a lesson can be learned” from all of this, Scozzafava said on CNN. Yes indeed: Under the right circumstances, the Washington press *isn’t* hard on losers.

■ We’re all guilty of jumping to conclusions from time to time, but the Left really went overboard in the case of a census worker who was found dead in rural Kentucky, hanged with the word “fed” written across his chest. Some suspicion of politically motivated violence was obviously warranted at this point, but many liberal commentators skipped the verification process entirely, speculating that prominent conservatives and the tea-party movement had incited murder. Andrew Sullivan titled a post “No Suicide,” addressing the “possibility” that “this is Southern populist terrorism, whipped up by the GOP and its Fox and talk radio cohorts.” “I Blame Bachmann,” a *Daily Kos* blogger added, helpfully noting the Minnesota congresswoman’s criticism of the census. The only problem was that the census worker had taken his own life and staged the scene to look like a murder, in the hopes that his family could collect on a life-insurance policy. He intended fraud; many on the Left were all too willing to be taken in.

■ Rep. Artur Davis, a black Democrat running for governor of Alabama, voted against his party’s health-care legislation. This moved Jesse Jackson to say, “You can’t vote against health care and call yourself a black man.” Davis might have replied that you can’t obey the dictates of Jesse Jackson and call yourself a man.

■ Rep. Ron Paul (R., Texas) has had some recent success in his audit-the-Fed campaign, with legislation clearing the Financial Services Committee. But the Fed already is audited—redundantly, resplendently audited. The Federal Reserve System and its member banks are audited by the comptroller general and by the Government Accountability Office. The Fed has its internal audits, too, while its balance sheet, financial statements, and legal compliance are audited independently, the most recent round having been conducted by Deloitte & Touche. Which is to say that the Fed is audited, but not by Congress—and that is by design. Paul’s crusade invites politicians with two-year attention spans to meddle in the working of what is intended to be an independent central bank. We have had our complaints about Greenspan and Bernanke, but we do not relish the prospect of replacing their leadership with that of Frank and Dodd. Congress oversees the Fed, and if it feels the need to shorten Bernanke’s britches it can do so through legislation. But inviting naked politics into the day-to-day operations of the Fed would be an error. We suspect Paul knows as much: His agenda is not so much to audit the Fed as to dissolve it. However sympathetic one might be to that project, how about starting with the Department of Education or PBS and working our way up? When he succeeds, as when he fails, Paul reminds us that the libertarian tendency needs better spokesmen.

■ The AmeriCorps scandal perks along like a slow-boiling stew. AmeriCorps, a federal community-service agency, gave $850,000 to St. Hope, a Sacramento school run by former Phoenix Suns star Kevin Johnson. Johnson was said to be spending money on personal errands and sexually harassing young female volunteers. Gerald Walpin, AmeriCorps’s inspector general, referred the matter to the local U.S. attorney in August 2008. But that fall Johnson, an Obama supporter, was elected mayor of Sacramento. He needed a clean bill of health to receive stimulus money, so St. Hope made a deal to pay back half of what it had received from AmeriCorps. When Walpin objected, the White House had him fired, smearing him as “confused” and “disoriented.” He was: He thought he was supposed to do his job, but his new job was to protect Friends of Obama.

■ On the eve of the long Thanksgiving weekend, the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel announced its view that executive-branch agencies should continue paying ACORN on existing contracts notwithstanding a congressional ban on government funding. ACORN, President Obama’s longtime ally, has been tied to serial voter-fraud schemes. More recently, an undercover investigation spectacularly showed ACORN officials offering to facilitate child-prostitution rings, illegal immigration, tax fraud, and other possible crimes. The resulting public outrage proved too much for even the Democratic Congress to ignore. But now Eric Holder’s department—see Andrew C. McCarthy’s article on page 30 for more sorry details about its politicization—

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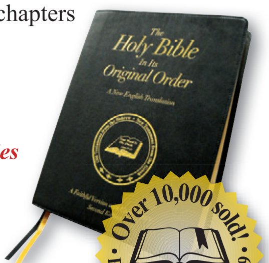
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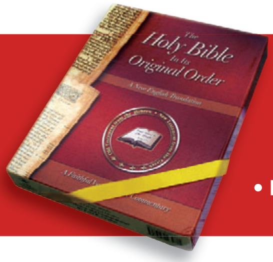
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has somehow concluded that a law barring public money from being "provided to" ACORN doesn't really mean what it says. There was a time, not so long ago, when Justice understood its mission to be law *enforcement.*

■ Matthew McCabe, Jonathan Keefe, and Julio Huertas, three petty officers in the Navy SEALs, have requested a court-martial in the alleged mistreatment of Ahmed Hashim Abed, an Iraqi terror suspect they helped capture. Abed says he was punched in the gut while being held prisoner, and has a bloody lip to prove it. Terrorists are trained to lie—e.g., the bogus charges of Koran flushing at Gitmo. But the military, after Abu Ghraib, is understandably strict. The three SEALs insist they are innocent and have demanded a court-martial to clear their records. Abed had been on the lam for five years after masterminding the murder of four Blackwater contractors in Fallujah, whose bodies were burned and dragged through the city; two of the blackened corpses were hung from a bridge so newsmen could photograph them. Abed's court-martial by the insurgents has not yet gotten under way.

■ Consent is the bedrock of international law in a Westphalian world order. A sovereign nation is not beholden to any international tribunal absent its assent to that tribunal's jurisdiction. In the U.S., that assent is granted by the Constitution's treaty-ratification process. Prudently, our nation has refrained from ratifying the "Rome Statute," which founded the International Criminal Court, a permanent tribunal for trying war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity. President Bush, in fact, withdrew the signature of President Clinton, who never sought the Senate's consent after helping midwife the pact. Transnational progressives, who use humanitarian law to advance their goal of a post-sovereign world order, seek to convert national-defense measures into actionable war crimes. Moreover, they arrogantly claim ICC jurisdiction over non-consenting nations. The Obama administration is rife with these tranzis, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who expresses "great regret" over her country's recalcitrance. Thus, there has been nary a peep since the chief ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo of Argentina, recently claimed jurisdiction over American soldiers in Afghanistan, announcing an investigation of allegations involving civilian bombing deaths and torture. If this escalates from posturing to actual charges, on which side will Obama be?

What did Obama get for his 'good manners' in China? Any concession on the currency, the environment, Iran, North Korea? Apparently not.

■ Early on, the Obama administration signaled that it would not place much emphasis on human rights and democracy—that was simply too George W. Bush. Hillary Clinton was especially clear about the Chinese: Human rights would be on the back burner, if on the stove at all. President Obama was true to this promise on his recent trip to China. Even before he went, he refused to meet with the Dalai Lama. And, in China, he did nothing to discomfort the Chinese authorities. He did not meet with democrats, did not insist on a wide television audience, did not give evidence that he was a representative of freedom. George W. Bush did better in Beijing; Ronald Reagan did much better in Moscow. Obama essentially let the Chinese government stage-manage his visit. He even performed one of his bows, to Wen Jiabao. And what did he get for his "good manners"? Any concession on the currency, the environment, Iran, North Korea? Apparently not. There's more to realism than abandoning our values.

■ Are we approaching the endgame on Iran? After the International Atomic Energy Agency passed a resolution censuring Iran for its clandestine nuclear site at Qom, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that the regime would build ten more. Bluster, that—but Iran's duplicity and intentions are now so undeniable that even Russia hints it will not stand in the way of new sanctions. There is no guarantee, though, that a sanctions resolution of consequence will escape the Security Council: Tehran has a friend in Beijing even if its relations with Moscow are chilling. And it is far from clear that unilateral U.S. sanctions, or sanctions imposed through a "coalition of the willing," would be effective (to take one problem, many proposals target the gasoline imports on which Iran depends—but the regime, with Chinese help, is already boosting domestic refining capacity). The negotiate-and-sanction approach has been given more than six years to work, and has not. The worst outcome would be the testing of an Iranian atomic bomb while the West is still in "Let's talk" mode; if there is not to be a bombing campaign against the nuclear sites—a course that may well be less costly than letting Iran go nuclear—our intellectual and material resources should be devoted to the formulation and execution of a containment strategy. President Obama should therefore make it his goal to bring the diplomatic game to a conclusion—and, by extension, to force the West's leaders to confront hard realities, and a hard choice—more than to secure the passage of this or that sanctions resolution.

■ The Iranian government has done something curious, in regard to Shirin Ebadi. She is the lawyer and human-rights activist who, in 2003, won the Nobel Peace Prize. The government recently confiscated her Nobel medal and diploma. For good measure, according to reports, its goons beat up her husband and threatened close relatives. (Ebadi herself has been out of the country since June.) Ebadi has not been a particularly outspoken or troublesome critic of the regime. Indeed, some other activists have faulted her for her relative restraint. Yet the government has moved against her. Why? Ebadi has the shield of the Nobel Peace Prize. And yet the government felt it could move. Why? They are in a period of extreme boldness, Iran's rulers. They believe they can do anything they like, without bringing the wrath of the "world community" down on them. What ever gave them that idea?

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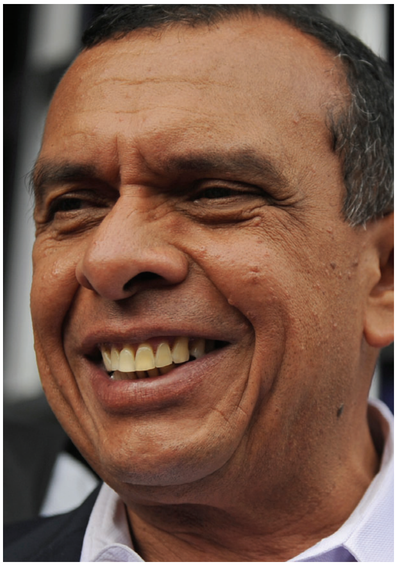
NR09

■ The headline from the Associated Press read, "Hassan Nasrallah re-elected as Hezbollah leader." We understand it was a real nail-biter: Nasrallah's reelection wasn't assured until the absentee ballots were counted.

■ Dubai World, the glitzy emirate's investment arm, is asking its creditors for an extension in repaying some of its debts. This is not so much a corporate failure as it is a sovereign default, inasmuch as the corporation and the state are one. It has sent a nauseating ripple through the financial markets, with investors fearing a round of similar defaults on the part of backward and undercapitalized regimes, such as the ones governing Ecuador, Vietnam, and California. Investors holding Dubai World's sharia-compliant *sukuk* bonds are lawyered up and eyeing the firm's hard assets—the *QE2* ocean liner and Cirque du Soleil among them—but are in a delicate position, inasmuch as the emirate's financial and legal system never has been tested in a comparable situation. There is something blackly amusing in the fact that Dubai, which still maintains debtors' prisons—bad-news borrowers compose 40 percent of its jailed population—is going deadbeat on a national level. But Americans are in no position to laugh very loudly.

■ Orson Welles's putdown of Switzerland in *The Third Man*—500 years of democracy and peace had produced only the cuckoo clock—incompletely described the place: He left out prickliness. Switzerland has rebuffed every conqueror, and stayed out of every war, since Napoleon. It keeps the peace among its traditional languages and religions by rigid federalism. Last month the Swiss held a referendum on one aspect of their newest religion, Islam, deciding, by a vote of 57.5 percent, to forbid the construction of new minarets. Over 300,000 Swiss, out of almost 7 million, are Muslim; four of their 150 prayer centers already have minarets, which may stay put. The anti-immigrant Swiss People's party backed the referendum as a preemptive defense against honor killings, forced marriages, and burqas. Minarets per se do not bring such things, though radical Islam does. Better to fight the ideology, not the architecture.

■ Under a new treaty coming into force, the European Union has acquired what it calls the "President of the Council," in other words a head of state with attendant duties and privileges. (The EU also has a "President of the Commission," and the working relationship of the two presidents remains to be discovered.) The only people allowed to have a say in the appointment of this lucky fellow were the heads of the 27 countries in the EU. Behind closed doors, they came up with one Herman Van Rompuy, a 62-year-old Belgian who for some months has been prime minister of that unhappy and divided country. Europeans in general had never heard of him, and even in Belgium his name drew a blank. Commentators, including many otherwise committed to the EU project, were far from kind. Accepting his unlikely elevation, Van Rompuy made a speech that was a downpour of clichés about unity and diversity. He mentioned taking steps "towards the global management of our planet." From the prime minister of a land where the rival communities do not speak to one another in one quick step to global imperium! Several of those unkind commentators suddenly, but as it were unanimously, remembered a line of Horace learnt in schooldays: *Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus*—the mountains are in labor, and a ridiculous little mouse is born.


Porfirio Lobo

■ It's now official: Hugo Chávez's bid to create a "Bolivarian" dictatorship in Honduras has failed. On November 29, Hondurans elected Porfirio Lobo of the center-right National party as their next president; Lobo will take office in January. At one time, the Obama administration said it would not consider the election legitimate unless deposed president Manuel Zelaya was first restored to his former office. The administration reversed its position after Honduran officials agreed to appoint an interim unity government and let the Honduran congress decide whether to reinstate Zelaya. Legislators wisely declined to put the Chávez disciple (who was removed from office in June for severe constitutional crimes) back in the presidential palace. Predictably, Zelaya denounced the November 29 election as fraudulent and urged Latin American leaders not to recognize its outcome. But it was clearly fair, and we hope that all governments in the region accept it—and the victory it constitutes for Honduran democracy.

■ When a Wisconsin National Guard unit got sent to Iraq, its members were equipped to handle uprisings, invasions, and missile attacks, but not even Army trainers could prepare them for the fiendish revenge that would be exacted by some captured opposition fighters. In early November, a group of detainees overheard the guardsmen talking about Brett Favre, the longtime Green Bay Packers quarterback, and how he had led his new team, the Minnesota Vikings, to victory at the Packers' home field. Ever since, the prisoners have been taunting the homesick Wisconsinites, whose camp is decorated in Packers green and gold, with pro-Favre and pro-Vikings slogans. The guardsmen's response has been much more restrained than what the detainees would face if they pulled the same stunt at Lambeau Field (human-rights advocates, take note); and here's hoping that wounded feelings are the worst injuries these soldiers will encounter during their deployment.

■ Do you believe that the U.S. is a land of opportunity, in which anyone can rise to security and prosperity if willing to put forth the necessary effort? If so, best not aspire to be a schoolteacher in the Gopher State. The University of Minnesota College of Education is determined that the state's future teachers must be cured of any attachment to the so-called American Dream. A report compiled last summer by the university's Teacher Education Redesign Initiative urges that trainee teachers be disabused of the "myth of meritocracy in the United States," instructed in the "history of demands for assimilation to white,

YURI CORTEZ/AFP

middle-class, Christian meanings and values," and torn from any attachment to "current colorblind ideology." The goal, the initiative plainly declares, is to produce teachers aware of "notions of white privilege, hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and internalized oppression." Such a program of cultural masochism would be easy to understand if funded by the sworn enemies of our country, but this is a public university, receiving 24 percent of its funds from Minnesota taxpayers. If they, or Gov. Tim Pawlenty, have anything to say about this indoctrination in "cultural competence," let's hear them speak up.

■ For 20 years, they have put up a Christmas tree in the Orange County Superior Courthouse. (This is in California: Bob Dornan country. At least it used to be that.) The tree is part of "Operation Santa Claus," which gives gifts to poor children. This year, a member of the public complained about the tree, and, on the basis of that one person's complaint, the court ditched the tree. Said a spokeswoman, "It's a public building and we have to serve the diversity of our community." But other people were not willing to accept that view of American life and law. Court employees petitioned for the tree's reinstatement; citizens at large gave the court an earful, too. Long story short: The court's powers-that-be brought back the tree. Who said every one of these "War on Christmas" stories has to have an unhappy ending? And who said that, on hearing the word "diversity," every Christmas tree must wilt?

■ Boy Scouts have overcome many enemies over the years: mosquitoes, bears, anti-religious zealots, and gay-rights activists. Now the group has faced down its fiercest foe of all: the Service Employees International Union. After Kevin Anderson, a 17-year-old aspiring Eagle Scout in Allentown, Pa., cleared a new footpath in a public park, the local SEIU branch threatened to file a grievance, on the grounds that landscaping is union work. No great surprise there; the SEIU thinks government exists for the purpose of employing its members. But when word of the union's power play got out, the outpouring of scorn from the public was merciless. The SEIU withdrew the complaint, its local officials resigned, and on Thanksgiving weekend, union members were among the 40 volunteers who performed repairs in Kimmets Rock Park—under Anderson's supervision. However much the SEIU may like to throw its weight around, it's no match for a Boy Scout with justice on his side.

■ H. C. Robbins Landon, always known as Robbie, was one of the world's greatest musicologists. Born in Boston, he spent most of his life in Europe collecting and editing scores. Primarily a Haydn specialist, he also studied the development of musical instruments, and collected them too. One of his pianos had belonged to Beethoven. In a letter to his patron Prince Lichnowsky, Beethoven had written that Haydn was the best composer of the day, but he had the unfair advantage of possessing a Broadwood, the new English model and the first with pedals. Beethoven wanted one too. The cost was 80 pounds, a huge sum at the time, but the prince paid. From the archives, Robbie further worked out that this Broadwood was likely to be in an Austrian castle belonging to a Count Herberstein. Robbie duly found the piano in a part of the castle that had been shut up. Every bit as aristocratic as the purchasing prince, the count said that Robbie had traced the piano and could therefore have it. Robbie made a wonderful tale of it, and indeed of his whole life. Aged 83, he has just died at his home in France. R.I.P.

■ The command "Fix bayonets!" is not much heard in modern warfare, though bayonet drill is still a component of infantry training in our armed forces. Perhaps the best-known bayonet charge by American troops in modern times took place on Feb. 7, 1951, near Soam-Ni, Korea. Capt. Lewis L. Millett led his unit, bayonets fixed, in an assault on a Communist position atop Hill 180. Captain Millett and his men, according to the Medal of Honor citation, "used their bayonets with such lethal effect that the enemy fled in wild disorder." The brave captain survived, though with wounds from grenade fragments, and went on to serve in Vietnam. When he retired with the rank of colonel in 1973, he could boast of having seen combat in two armies on three continents in three wars. (Before Korea, he had served with both Canadian and American forces in WWII.) Colonel Millett died on November 14, at age 88, and sleeps in glory. R.I.P.

AT WAR

Unhappy Warrior

CHURCHILLIAN it was not. Obama's long bout of leak-prone agonizing over his Afghanistan policy came to a limp end in his strange West Point speech.

The speech was by turns defensive, graceless, intellectually mushy, and self-righteous. Most of what he said will soon be forgotten, and deserves to be. What will endure is the policy, and here—most important—Obama made basically the right call.

He gave Gen. Stanley McChrystal 30,000 troops and endorsed McChrystal's counterinsurgency plan. In so doing, despite all his explicit and implicit shots at his predecessor, Obama echoed in the context of Afghanistan the case Bush made for the surge in Iraq: To deny al-Qaeda a safe haven, we will deploy more troops to secure population centers and give the government breathing room to foster its own security forces.

In areas of Afghanistan where we have troops in sufficient numbers, we've routed the Taliban. But it's pointless to do this in one town if a shortage of manpower keeps us from doing in the next town over, which the enemy can use as a base for building bombs and launching attacks. The additional combat brigades will fill the gaps in our effort and make it possible for us to fight to truly secure the strategic gem of the Pashtun south, Kandahar, which will be to Obama's Afghan surge what Baghdad was to Bush's Iraq surge.

The most objectionable element of Obama's speech was his pledge to start pulling out troops in 18 months. It's foolish to give the enemy such an explicit timeline for the end of our maximum application of force. And it speaks to a worrisome impatience—and sensitivity to the political calendar—in an endeavor that requires time and an iron stomach. Obama said any withdrawal will be conditions-based, but here he contradicted himself: If the withdrawal is to based on (unspecified) conditions, why arbitrarily pick a date on the calendar at all?

It's obvious that Obama's heart isn't in the Afghan War and that he is therefore incapable of communicating the depth of commitment appropriate when sending men and women into harm's way. His base turned on the war as soon as it lost its usefulness as a campaign talking point, and Obama never had any

JOHN ANGELILLO/UPI

intention of becoming a war president. He cares most about his domestic project of making us a Western European–style social democracy.

Whatever his inclinations, though, the evidence brought him back around to supporting the McChrystal strategy, which had been the Obama strategy until he lurched into his period of indecision. The premises of the so-called Biden plan, a limited counterterrorism approach, didn't withstand serious scrutiny. No, the war couldn't be waged by drones and Special Forces, and Afghanistan couldn't be allowed to slide back into chaos without endangering the region and our national security.

This left Obama no real choice but to make his awkward debut as a war president. He's a reluctant warrior and a conflicted commander-in-chief, but for now he's made the right decision.

GLOBAL WARMING

Peer Pressure

The thing to understand about the scandal surrounding the e-mails leaked from Britain's Climatic Research Unit (CRU) is that it is actually three scandals. There is a scientific scandal, in which the leading lights of the climate-research cabal conspired to fudge data and silence skeptics. There is a media scandal, in which reporters and editors on the "climate beat" at the world's most prominent news organizations acted as stenographers for the cabal and ignored the scandal when it broke. And there is a political scandal, in which officeholders here and abroad used the bunk science as a pretext for expanding their control of (and take from) the world's energy markets.

The largest scandal is scientific. The e-mails show climate researchers at a handful of universities and think tanks engaged in unscrupulous and thuggish behavior. Phil Jones of CRU, Michael Mann of Penn State University, and other leaders of the climate cartel discussed the statistical tricks they used to "hide the decline" of atmospheric temperatures the way aging Hollywood starlets might swap plastic-surgery tips. Other data were fudged to cover up warm periods that did not fit the theory of anthropogenic global warming.

But the most troubling aspect of the scientific scandal is the corruption of the peer-review process for academic papers and studies on global warming. Jones and Mann have historically dismissed out of hand any criticism of their work that appeared outside of peer-reviewed scientific journals. At the same time, the leaked e-mails reveal that these men were working behind the scenes to narrow the definition of "peer-reviewed journals" to include only those journals that refused to publish any papers or studies questioning their consensus. "We have to stop considering *Climate Research* as a legitimate peer-reviewed journal," Mann wrote after the journal published a skeptical study.

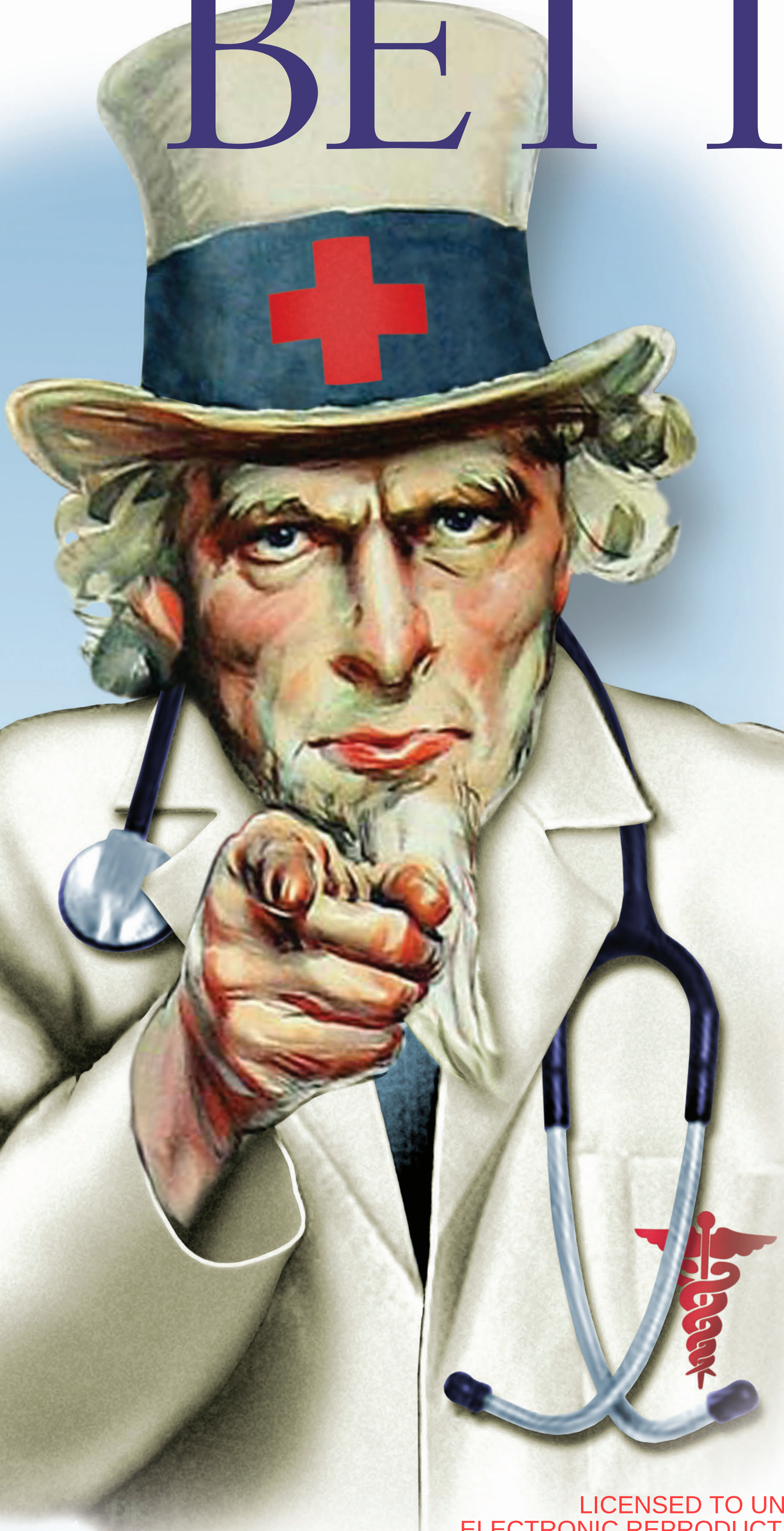
Reconstructing historical climate data is such an inherently speculative endeavor that it barely qualifies as science. The same can be said for the piling of assumption upon assumption in order to create the dire scenarios that drive the political debate over global warming. The e-mails don't discredit the basic idea of anthropogenic global warming—carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas—but they remind us how much we do not know even as the Left rushes to action on the basis of an utterly false sense of certainty.

The biggest names in climate research manipulating data, evading the Freedom of Information Act, silencing critics: sounds newsworthy. But the second scandal is what the e-mails revealed about the watchdog reporters on the climate beat. They remind us of that old scary movie: When the phone rang at CRU with a reporter on the line, the call was usually coming from inside the house. The e-mails depict Andrew Revkin of the *New York Times* acting as a sort of communications director for the group. On one occasion, when a critic of Mann's work exposed a problem with the cabal's data, Revkin told Mann not to worry. "I'm going to blog on this as it relates to the value of the peer review process and not on the merits of the . . . attacks," he wrote, because peer review is "where the herky-jerky process of knowledge building happens." Mann replied that he couldn't have said it better himself—and that's the problem.

The final scandal is that the U.S. government came very close to turning the keys to the national energy sector over to these people, and still might. The cap-and-trade legislation that passed the House this summer has been stymied in the Senate, but the Obama administration's Environmental Protection Agency—emboldened by a mistaken Supreme Court decision—maintains that it can unilaterally regulate carbon dioxide as a pollutant. Obama himself has announced he will attend a climate summit in Copenhagen, after rumors circulated that he planned to skip it—as if a rousing speech at the global-warming Super Bowl could save the fraudsters' discredited ideology.

Liberals like to say that conservatives are at war with science. But the leaked CRU e-mails show a subset of the scientific community at war with the conservative temperament. Projects to transform society through radical changes to our way of life ought to be approached with the utmost skepticism, and any process that treats skeptics as blasphemers is the opposite of scientific inquiry. This has been the conservative position in the climate-change debate for some time; these scandals give the argument new resonance.

FEELING BETTER?



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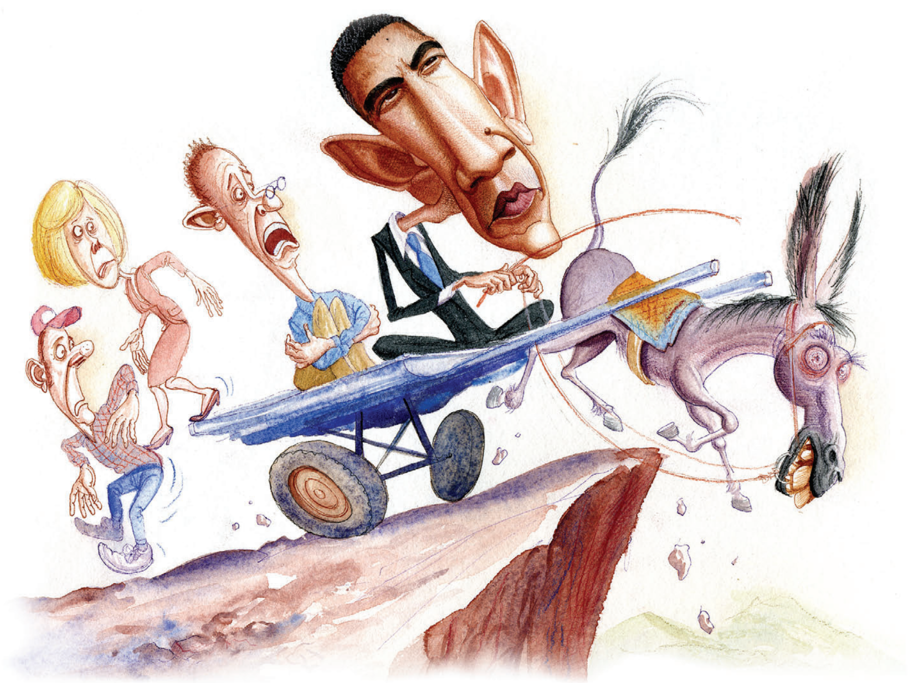

ROMAN GENN

But Now We Shout ‘No!’

Rising Republican fortunes reveal a backlash against the Democrats’ excesses

BY JAY COST

Barack Obama’s election was supposed to signal a monumental shift in public affairs. His victory was to be the liberal counterpoint to 1980, with Obama as the left-wing Ronald Reagan. He was the leader of a new majority, one that demanded a more active role for the government in the average American’s life.

So much for that! Less than a year after the 44th president’s inauguration, conservatives are on the rebound. Gallup recently found that self-identified conservatives accounted for two out of five Americans, double the number of liberals. The public is also coming around to the Republican party, both in polls and at the ballot box: Republicans won a major victory in the New Jersey gubernatorial race last month, swept the field in Virginia, and gained ground in Pennsylvania.

What is the cause of this rebound? Some liberals—Markos Moulitsas comes to mind—have argued that the Democratic party has not been liberal enough. But make no mistake: This government is about as liberal as any since the New Deal, and the return of the Right is a consequence of the Left’s overreach.

Mr. Cost is the author of the HorseRaceBlog at RealClearPolitics.com.

A metric commonly used to track the ideology of members of Congress is the DW-Nominate system developed by Profs. Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal. Their data show that the 110th House of Representatives—the last one in Pres. George W. Bush’s term—was as liberal as *any* since the Great Depression. The 111th House has about 25 fewer Republicans and 25 more Democrats, though it’s too soon to tell for sure whether it’s more liberal by the DW-Nominate metric.

As for the Senate, there has been a noticeable leftward shift thanks to the election in 2008 of new Democratic senators. Using a different methodology, Poole and Rosenthal estimate that Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Mark Pryor of Arkansas are in the middle of the upper chamber this year—and historically these two have earned fairly liberal scores from the DW-Nominate system.

The liberalism of southern Democrats like Landrieu and Pryor illustrates another feature of the 111th Congress: Conservative Democrats from Dixie are in short supply. The tenure of Rep. Heath Shuler (D., N.C.) is a case in point. Shuler—who represents Asheville and the western part of the Tar Heel State—has gotten flak from his party for bucking Speaker Pelosi on a series of important votes. Most recently, he broke with the leadership by voting not only against the health-care bill, but also against the motion to bring it to the floor. Yet 50 years ago, his politics would have been about those of an *average* Southern Democrat. Republicans once aligned with such members to defeat the programs of the Democratic left wing. Nowadays, there are simply not enough Heath Shulers to form such a coalition.

Broadly speaking, this kind of polarization has characterized both parties, even if the mainstream media’s focus is solely on how “radical” the GOP has become. In the last 50 years, Republicans have become more conservative, and Democrats have become more liberal. So, while the Democratic party controls as many seats now as it did in 1971, today’s Democratic congressmen are substantially more liberal.

What’s more, the few moderate Democrats left in the chamber do not have control over the important committees. When she won the speaker’s gavel in 2007, Nancy Pelosi made a consequential decision to award committee chairmanships on the basis of seniority. Fifty years ago, that would have been a boon to southern, conservative Democrats, because the South was a one-party region and southern Democrats, once elected, rarely lost. But Dixie is no longer solely the domain of the Democrats, and southern Democrats are less likely to have the seniority needed to gavel Ways and Means or Judiciary. Meanwhile, urban and coastal congressional districts *have* become one-party fiefdoms. Ultra-liberal members like Charlie Rangel and John Conyers never have to worry about defeat—and thus they hold the important gavels. The most moderate committee chairman is probably Ike Skelton of Missouri, of the Armed Services Committee—and it is a stretch to label him a moderate.

As if this were not enough, Barack Obama is the president of the United States. Few Democratic presidents have

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had weaker ties to the South, the historic base of the party of Jackson. That Obama could win the presidency without much support from the South says a great deal about the Democrats' slow, steady transformation into a party dominated by northern and western liberals.

So can it be any wonder that this government has pursued the agenda it has? The stimulus bill, the cap-and-trade bill, and the health-care bill were all designed under the direction of liberal committee chairmen, voted upon by a Congress that tilts farther to the left than any since the Great Depression, and promoted by a president that *National Journal* labeled the most liberal senator of 2007. Not only that, Obama and the congressional leadership have again and again shown their willingness to shed the votes of the more "moderate" members in order to pull these bills as far left as possible. Ike Skelton may be a liberal by historical standards, but the health-care bill voted on last month was too liberal for him. Thirty-eight Democrats joined him in defecting on the president's top domestic priority. There were even more defections on the cap-and-trade vote.

It is a stretch to argue that the country voted for a dramatic leftward 'correction' in public policy last fall.

The public increasingly sees this government for what it is. Around the time of Obama's election last year, just 28 percent of likely voters told Rasmussen that then-senator Obama was "very liberal." Today, that number is up to 46 percent. So it is fair to ask: Is this dramatic leftward shift what the country voted for last November?

I highly doubt it. When Barack Obama ran for office, he campaigned as a bipartisan healer. He railed against the "phony bipartisanship" of his predecessor and the "pettiness of our politics." He wanted to change the tone, to adopt the best ideas of both sides and forge a broad consensus. He has not governed in this way. Instead, he has shown himself to be much more partisan than George W. Bush, who was able to garner bipartisan support on his major domestic reforms. Obama, by contrast, has pushed liberal bills that few if any Republicans could support, then blasted Republican obstructionism and pettiness. The media excuse this kind of attack because—being the northeastern social liberals they generally are—they are part of his core constituency. But that does not mean the broader public has failed to notice.

Additionally, 49 districts voted for John McCain for president while sending a Democrat to Congress. Many of these congressional Democrats are Blue Dogs, and won election by emphasizing their independence from the national party or their roots in the district. The size of the current Democratic majority is 41 seats, meaning that these McCain Democrats make the difference between Pelosi as speaker and Pelosi as minority leader. There are also 13 Democratic senators in states that John McCain won. This is more than the size of Harry Reid's majority.

So it is indeed a stretch to argue that the country voted for a dramatic leftward "correction" in public policy last fall. It voted for a presidential candidate who promised to reach a hand across the aisle, and in many congressional districts the people split their ballots—which if anything should be interpreted as an endorsement of Obama's broken promise to bridge the nation's political divides.

This conclusion accounts for the country's subsequent shift to the right in the polls and at the ballot box. If voters last fall did not seek root-and-branch change but are now having it foisted on them anyway, we should expect to see exactly the backlash we are seeing. And if voters are in search of a moderate, bipartisan course for public policy and the governing Democratic party is not delivering it to them, then bringing back the Republicans is their only option.

Americans have rarely used the biennial election as an occasion to change the government dramatically. Yet if the Democrats continue to pursue uncompromising, dogmatically liberal policies, we should expect the country to take advantage of the opportunity the framers wisely granted it. **NR**

Asian Persuasion

Obama inherits Bush's quiet triumphs in the East

BY DUNCAN CURRIE

During a twelve-day span in November, Barack Obama met with the leaders of Japan, China, and India. The substance of his trip to the Far East was eclipsed by an imprudent bow before the Japanese emperor. Obama's White House state dinner for Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh was overshadowed by a pair of party-crashers. Yet the tabloid-friendly news items should not distract us from the profound significance of U.S. dealings with Asia's Big Three.

"This is the first time in history when there have been three powerful countries in Asia, all at the same time," notes former *Economist* editor Bill Emmott in his 2008 book, *Rivals*. "Managing the relationship between China, India and Japan promises to be one of the most important tasks in global affairs during the next decade and beyond, comparable in importance to the need to find peaceful ways to manage the relationships between Europe's great powers during the twentieth century."

As President Obama tackles this challenge, he should seek to preserve and build upon the legacy of George W. Bush, whose Asia policies were far more successful than his myriad critics have acknowledged. Indeed, the Bush administration quietly pulled off an impressive diplomatic feat: strengthening U.S. ties with China while concurrently boosting America's partnerships with India, Japan, Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and other Asian-Pacific countries wary of China's growing influence.

Writing in *Foreign Affairs* shortly before the 2008 U.S. presidential election, Japanese journalist Yoichi Funabashi, editor-in-chief of the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper (a leading daily), lauded Bush for "promoting sound relationships with Beijing and Tokyo simultaneously." His administration elevated the U.S.-Japan alliance "to an almost unprecedented level," said Funabashi, even as it solidified "a healthy working rapport" with China. In

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About Your Professor

Dr. Patrick N. Allitt is Goodrich C. White Professor of History at Emory University, where he has taught for over 20 years. A widely published and award-winning author, his books include *The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities throughout American History*.

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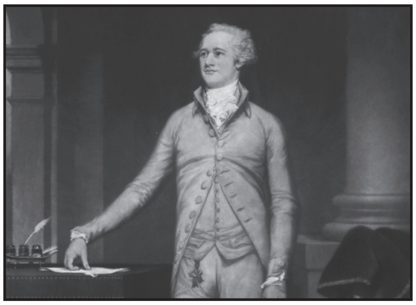

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addition, Bush embraced India and signed a groundbreaking bilateral nuclear pact, giving the South Asian giant crucial assistance in its drive for global-power status. Last December, Harvard historian and India expert Sugata Bose told me that bolstering U.S. relations with the world's largest democracy "may turn out to be the most significant foreign-policy achievement of the Bush administration."

Such achievements conflict with the popular storyline that Bush ignored Asia after 9/11. In fact, a 2008 survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA) and the East Asia Institute (EAI) found that pluralities in Japan (47 percent), China (45 percent), and South Korea (42 percent)—plus a majority in Indonesia (58 percent)—felt U.S. influence in the region had *increased* over the past decade, whereas only 28 percent of Chinese, 24 percent of South Koreans, 20 percent of Japanese, and 11 percent of Indonesians thought U.S. influence had declined. Meanwhile, 76 percent of Vietnamese, 69 percent of Japanese, 66 percent of Chinese, and 54 percent of South Koreans described America's influence in Asia as "somewhat" or "very" positive.

Bush's first serious Asia test was the April 2001 EP-3 spy-plane dispute with China. That same month, he approved a huge arms sale to Taiwan and made a provocative declaration: Speaking to ABC's *Good Morning America*, Bush pledged that if China ever attacked the island democracy, the U.S. would do "whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself." This remark triggered a media frenzy, but the White House insisted that U.S. policy toward Taiwan had not changed. In December 2003, Bush publicly chided then–Taiwanese president Chen Shui-bian for a series of "comments and actions" that appealed to pro-independence sentiment on the island and, from a U.S. perspective, needlessly riled Beijing. Bush affirmed that Washington was opposed to unilateral disruptions of the China-Taiwan status quo.

The rebuke of Chen, which angered many conservatives, reflected the deeper pragmatism that guided Bush's China policy. Though he prodded Beijing on human rights, met with Chinese dissidents and the Dalai Lama, and praised Taiwan as "a free and democratic Chinese society," Bush's approach to the Middle Kingdom was fundamentally realist. His administration adopted some foolish protectionist measures that irked the Chinese, but it also created the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue, which was designed to manage what former Treasury secretary Hank Paulson called "the most important bilateral economic relationship in the world today."

Yet the Bush administration recognized that engagement with Beijing should be balanced by greater cooperation with the Asian-Pacific democracies. While Tony Blair was his most conspicuous chum among foreign statesmen, Bush also forged warm personal bonds with Japan's Junichiro Koizumi (prime minister from 2001 to 2006), Australia's John Howard (prime minister from 1996 to 2007), and India's Singh (prime minister since 2004). Their four countries—America, Japan, Australia, and India—coordinated relief efforts after the 2004 Asian tsunami, and in September 2007 they held large-scale naval exercises in the Indian Ocean (along with Singapore).

Though he was frequently caricatured as a pro-democracy crusader, Bush also pursued closer ties with undemocratic Vietnam, a country with a young, energetic, and broadly pro-American population of more than 86 million, whose leaders are eager to cultivate friendly relations with the U.S. as a hedge against China. During the Bush years, notes a 2009 Congressional Research Service report, "the United States and Vietnam dramatically upgraded diplomatic and strategic aspects of their relationship to the point where the two countries have all-but-normalized bilateral relations, at least from the U.S. point of view." In 2007, they signed a trade and investment framework agreement. A year later, they launched official "political-military talks," started negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty, and established the U.S.-Vietnam Education Task Force.

U.S. trade with Vietnam flourished under Bush, who also completed bilateral free-trade pacts with Singapore, Australia, and South Korea. The Korea deal, signed way back in June 2007, still awaits congressional approval. Obama should pressure Hill Democrats to quit their stonewalling. There is no good reason for Congress to alienate the pro-American government of South Korean president Lee Myung-bak.

Obama should also learn from his predecessor's mistakes with the other Korea. Bush's second-term decision to ease sanctions against the North and remove it from the State Department's list of terror sponsors exasperated Japan and failed to persuade Pyongyang to scrap its nuclear-weapons program; indeed, North Korea conducted its second nuclear test this past May. Obama should aggressively enforce United Nations Resolution 1874, which authorized new sanctions and called for inspections of North Korean cargo. As former National Security Council (NSC) official Victor Cha points out in the *Washington Quarterly*, "The resolution effectively institutionalizes, in a U.N. context," Bush's Proliferation Security Initiative, "making it both more effective and more inclusive." Cha also recommends that the U.S. prepare thoroughly for a possible collapse of the North Korean regime, and that China be included in the relevant multilateral discussions.

Of course, given China's massive holdings of U.S. government debt, Washington has limited leverage over Beijing. In *Superfusion*, his new book on U.S.-China economic interdependence, economist Zachary Karabell argues that in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, this interdependence "has become even more vital to the prosperity not just of hundreds of millions of Americans and more than a billion Chinese but for everyone everywhere." As we've heard countless times since the crisis erupted, the U.S.-China relationship must be rebalanced: Chinese need to spend more, and Americans need to save more; China needs to expand its domestic consumer market, and America needs to produce more exports.

While the U.S. and China must collaborate on a range of issues—economic rebalancing, trade, currency, energy development—Obama should eschew the concept of a U.S.-China "G2," which causes heartburn in New Delhi, Tokyo, and elsewhere. The president should remember that, in the 2008 CCGA/EAI survey, only 27 percent of Indonesians, 21 percent of South Koreans, and 10 percent of Japanese said they would be comfortable with China's becoming the "leader of Asia." In general, Obama should avoid fostering the idea that America's relationship with China is being elevated at the expense of its partnerships with India, Japan, and others.

Take the U.S.-China Joint Statement released on November 17. Indian officials were troubled by a passage that suggested the U.S. and China were "ready to strengthen communication, dialogue and cooperation on issues related to South

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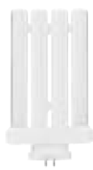

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Asia and work together to promote peace, stability and development in that region." The notion of China's brokering diplomatic negotiations between India and Pakistan is anathema to New Delhi.

Sometime over the new few decades, India will surpass China to become the most populous country on earth. Goldman Sachs has projected that India could have a bigger economy than the United States by 2050. After neglecting New Delhi for much of his first year in office, Obama used Prime Minister Singh's recent visit as an opportunity to tout the bilateral partnership that Bush did so much to nurture. The Indians want to see a long-term U.S. commitment to pacifying and stabilizing Afghanistan. They also want U.S. authorities to exert more pressure on Pakistan. "They feel the source of the problem in Afghanistan is the Pakistani army," says C. Raja Mohan, a prominent Indian strategic analyst.

In Japan, meanwhile, a new prime minister from an inexperienced party is grappling with deflation, surging public debt, an aging workforce, and a shrinking population. Yukio Hatoyama, who took office in September, following the country's most severe recession of the post-war era, inherited a slew of economic woes. He immediately spawned a new foreign-policy dilemma by wrangling with the Obama administration over the planned relocation of U.S. military personnel in Japan. Hatoyama has advocated a more "equal" U.S.-Japan alliance.

Handling the somewhat disorganized and amateurish Hatoyama government will require diplomatic finesse. Luckily, Obama's Asia team is "every bit as good" as the Bush team, says Michael Green, who served as a high-level NSC official for Asia from 2001 to 2005. Obama's seasoned and well-respected Asia hands include Kurt Campbell (the top State Department official for East Asia) and Jeffrey Bader (senior director for Asian affairs at the NSC).

Emmott, the former *Economist* editor, stresses that, for all the attention devoted to the Middle East since 9/11, "the most important long-term trend in world affairs does indeed remain the shift in economic and political power to Asia." Bush's skillful diplomacy both adapted to and influenced this shift. Outside of North Korea, it yielded salutary and even historic results, which the Obama administration can now harvest. **NR**

The Fisherman's Friend

A look at Art Pope's distinctive, policy-centered brand of philanthropy

BY JOHN J. MILLER

EARLIER this year, a well-heeled banker contacted North Carolina businessman Art Pope and offered to invest and manage the funds of the John William Pope Foundation. Pope explained his philanthropy: In addition to supporting food banks and hospice care, the foundation donated millions of dollars to right-of-center public-policy organizations. "[The banker] looked at me and very nicely, politely said, 'Well, Art, most of our clients are engaged in traditional charity to help people. We also have some clients who get involved in conservative causes.'"

That struck Pope as a strange distinction, which is why he told the story on November 3, at the State Policy Network's annual conference, in Asheville, N.C. A few minutes earlier, he had received the organization's Thomas Roe Award, given to the individual who has done the most to advance the national movement of free-market, state-level think tanks—you know, organizations whose advocacy of low taxes, limited government, and individual freedom doesn't help people.

Among philanthropists who support the machinery of conservative public-policy making, Pope is a pioneer. His creative investments have shifted the political culture of North Carolina to the right. He hasn't mimicked the strategy of wealthy liberals in Colorado, who have turned their state in recent elections from Republican red to a purplish blue. Yet his story reveals a few similarities and may serve as a model for beleaguered conservatives who don't want merely to win the next election but also to create the conditions for long-term political success.

The 53-year-old James Arthur "Art" Pope was born in Fayetteville, N.C., and grew up in Raleigh. His father—the namesake of the family foundation—was John William Pope, an entrepreneur who started Variety Wholesalers, which today owns and operates about 500 retail-merchandise stores in the South. Art could have joined the family business at a young age, but he found himself pulled in a different direction. He majored in political science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and studied law at Duke.

The most important part of his education took place outside the classroom. Pope attended a summer camp at Wake Forest that was run by the Cato Institute. He borrowed his father's copies of *Reason* and read books by Friedrich Hayek and Ayn Rand. "I did this in my spare time because none of my teachers assigned them," he says. After earning his law degree, he joined a law firm. Then he threw himself into politics, signing up for the gubernatorial campaign of Jim Martin in 1984.

Martin was elected North Carolina's governor, becoming only the second Republican to achieve this in the 20th century. Pope entered the administration as special counsel. He experienced almost immediate frustration: "The state had been Democratic for so long that everything was oriented toward Democratic priorities," he says. "There was nowhere to look for good public-policy ideas." Martin sent a delegation to Tennessee, where Republican Lamar Alexander (now a senator) was chief executive of a southern state. But Pope sensed the need for something else: an infrastructure of conservative organizations based in North Carolina.

In 1986, Pope left government and started working at Variety Wholesalers. His father charged him with setting up the Pope Foundation. "He wanted to preserve and protect the free-enterprise system that had allowed the business to do well," says Pope.

It was a good assignment for Pope, who describes himself as a policy wonk at heart. Initially, he tried to persuade national conservative organizations to focus some of their attention on North Carolina. He also tried to work with existing center-left groups within the state. Neither approach paid off. Then, in the late 1980s, the Heritage Foundation introduced Pope to the emerging effort to establish free-market think tanks in state capitals. "That led to the birth of the John Locke Foundation," he says.

The John Locke Foundation opened its doors in 1990. The organization is named after the 17th-century English philosopher because of his little-known local

“Biographies good enough for movie material.”

—The American Spectator

Contained in the pages of this book by Young America’s Foundation’s Nicole Hoplin and Ron Robinson are the stories that have rarely been told by the media. They are the stories of the vibrant lives of people who stood behind some of the Conservative Movement’s brightest moments and who received little recognition or gratitude from the Movement or the country they shaped over the years. More importantly, they are stories of how the most significant books, institutions, and leaders came to be.

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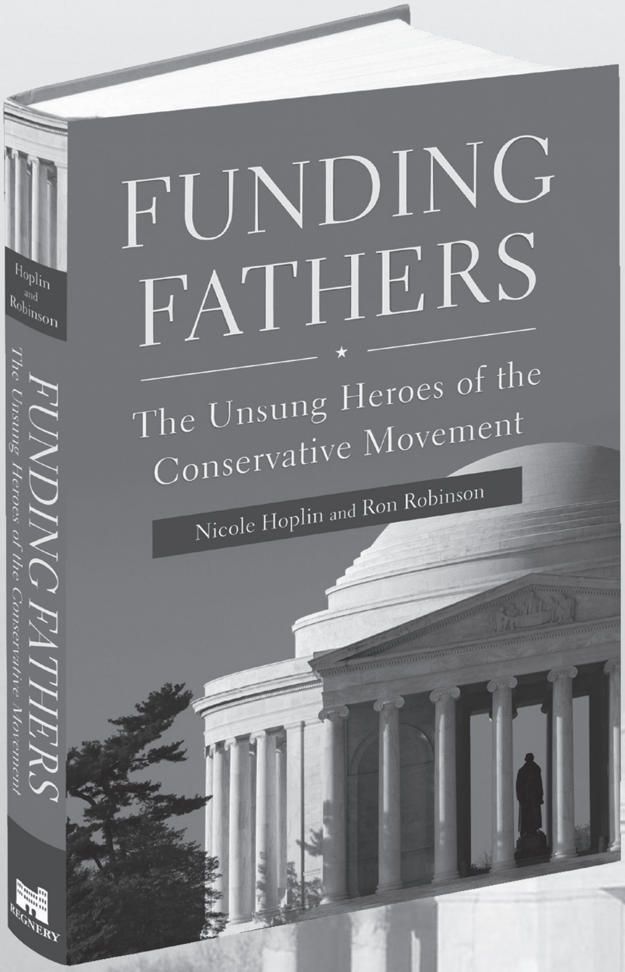
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connection: Although Locke never set foot in the New World, he helped write the constitution of colonial Carolina. The foundation's first president was Marc Rotterman.

For several years, the John Locke Foundation was small: It had a budget in the low six figures and a staff that could be counted on one hand. But it was also feisty, and began to attract attention. During the first year of Bill Clinton's presidency, it issued a pair of papers on health care—one on Clinton's plan, the other on health care in North Carolina. "Two months later, our tiny organization faced an IRS audit," says Rotterman. "Hell of a coincidence, isn't it?"

The author of the second study was John Hood. As a UNC student in the 1980s, he and his twin brother had started the *Carolina Critic*, a conservative campus newspaper. "The Popes were looking for opportunities to give on campus," says Hood. The Pope Foundation supported the *Critic*—and, perhaps more important, Art Pope forged what would become a long tie with Hood. When Rotterman left the John Locke Foundation in 1996, Hood took over. He remains there today as president and chairman. The foundation currently has a budget of $3.3 million and employs about 30 people. It is easily the most influential public-policy group in North Carolina and one of the most effective state-level think tanks in the country.

Philanthropists who invest in the development of public policy are a rare breed—the kind whose unconventional giving confuses a lot of potential donors. Yet Pope sees it as an essential form of charity. "You've heard the old proverb that if you give a man a fish, you'll feed him for a day, and if you teach him how to fish, you'll feed him for a lifetime," he says. "A lot of philanthropy is about giving fish, which is very important." The Pope Foundation supports Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army, and similar groups. "But these are short-term, direct measures that treat symptoms." Teaching a person to fish involves addressing underlying causes through education—so the Pope Foundation provides grants to schools, the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts.

Even this isn't enough, however. "You have to take it one step further," says Pope. "Teaching a man to fish presupposes that you have a right to fish and a right to keep the fish you catch. It assumes that you can take your fish to market and sell it, and use the proceeds to buy clothes for your kids. Too many philanthropists don't even consider that in a just and functioning society, you must have individual liberty with property rights, the rule of law, and limited constitutional government." And that's where donations to groups that defend free enterprise against the encroachments of government come in.

The John Locke Foundation accepts more support from the Pope Foundation than does any other organization: nearly $2.4 million in the last fiscal year alone. But it is by no means the only recipient. There's also the John William Pope Civitas Institute, which encourages grassroots activism ($1.5 million), the North Carolina Institute for Constitutional Law, which litigates ($680,000), and the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, which monitors colleges and universities ($479,000). Altogether, the Pope Foundation disbursed more than $6 million to North Carolina policy groups. Another $4 million went to national organizations such as Americans for Prosperity, educational programs, and traditional charities.

That's a lot of money, but less than perhaps meets the eye. Hood counts about a dozen right-of-center groups in North Carolina with a combined budget of $8.5 million. This compares with about 40 left-of-center organizations with budgets totaling $22 million. So the Pope Foundation and its beneficiaries are like a small-market club in Major League Baseball: They can compete against a team that has more cash, but winning takes strong leadership, hard work, and a lot of ingenuity.

By creating a web of state-based organizations that promote free-market ideas in North Carolina, Pope has realized the vision he had as a young lawyer in Governor Martin's office. "He understands the intersection of politics and policy better than most," says Tracie Sharp, president of the State Policy Network. "That's because of his personal experience." In addition to working for a governor, Pope has tried his own hand at politics. He served four terms in the North Carolina House of Representatives and was an unsuccessful candidate for lieutenant governor. Pope says he has no plan to run for anything in the future but won't rule it out. He is currently busy overseeing Variety Wholesalers, a duty that became more demanding when his father died in 2006.

On the surface, North Carolina does not appear to be in the midst of a conservative renaissance. It routinely elects Democrats to statewide office. Democrats control both chambers of the state legislature; Republicans never have led the senate in modern times and only briefly have they led the house. Last year, Barack Obama carried the Tar Heel State. "If you measure success by electing Republicans, then we haven't been a success," says Pope. But that's not how he measures it. He can point to an array of policy victories. Earlier this year, when the state needed to make budget cuts, it turned to the John Locke Foundation for advice on where to trim. Pope-funded groups also played a role in defeating a bill that would have allowed cities to use tax dollars to fund political campaigns. In North Carolina, conservatives have a far greater role than the strength of the GOP would indicate.

The most noticeable example of influence may be the *Carolina Journal*, a publication of the Locke Foundation. At a time when many newspapers are downsizing, especially in the area of investigative journalism, the work of executive editor Don Carrington and others has put former Democratic governor Mike Easley on the brink of a federal corruption indictment. The *Carolina Journal* has reported on other major figures, too. Five years ago, its articles helped lead to the prison sentence of Frank Ballance, a former Democratic congressman. "We try to convince politicians to stop wasting our money and stealing our freedom, but a more permanent solution may be to incarcerate them," jokes Hood. Several other state think tanks are now trying to establish nonprofit journalism arms.

Pope has tried to persuade philanthropists within North Carolina to support his endeavors, but with only mixed success. "The problem is that many of them can't see the outcomes immediately," he says. "This kind of philanthropy isn't like giving money to a food bank, where you can count the number of people you feed. It isn't like giving a donation to a candidate, where you can know a result on Election Day. We're trying to make good public policy and stop bad public policy." He mentions William Wilberforce, the British politician who fought to abolish the slave trade. "What he accomplished took decades," says Pope.

A generation into what may be his life's great cause, Art Pope is willing to wait. **NR**

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The Uncertainty Principle

America dominates science with a classic American formula: freedom

BY FRED SCHWARZ

When the 2009 Nobel Prizes were announced, Barack Obama's peace award came as a shock, but no one was surprised that of the nine winners of Nobel science prizes (chemistry, physics, and medicine), six had done their research at American institutions. The United States has dominated science Nobels for many decades, accounting for at least half the laureates in every decade since the 1950s.

Doomsayers keep predicting that the U.S. will be overtaken by a prosperous and united Europe and a confident and powerful China (India too, eventually). Our public schools, it is said, do such a bad job of nurturing scientific talent that the pipeline will eventually dry up. Yet however true this may be, America has maintained supremacy in science the same way it does in baseball: with talented immigrants and plenty of money.

Since 1946, 62 immigrants to the U.S. have won Nobel Prizes in science, while only one U.S. expatriate has done so. Over the last quarter century, America's score is 26 in, 0 out. The U.K., by contrast, is 3 in and 6 out in that period; Germany is 1 in, 3 out. Admittedly, these totals can be shifted a bit by fiddling with the counting rules, and prizes are sometimes given for work done decades in the past, but America's strong and enduring attraction for scientists is unmistakable.

Money is a big part of it, to be sure. Totaling up all sources, public and private, the U.S. spends about 2.6 percent of its GDP on research and development. This compares with 2.0 percent in the EU—though the EU's GDP is larger, and other nations, such as Japan, South Korea, and Israel, spend a higher percentage than the U.S. does. America's dominance results not only from prosperity, but from another vital American attribute: freedom. While scientific research in other industrialized nations is centralized, hierarchical, and bureaucratic, in America it is competitive and entrepreneurial.

This is not to say that politics plays no role in deciding how American science is funded; far from it. But in America, governmental sources of funding are much more diffuse (half a dozen federal agencies and departments spend at least $1 billion a year on basic research), and private sources are much more numerous, than in most European or East Asian nations. It all adds up to strength through pluralism.

Consider the last five years of science Nobelists. Of the 37 total laureates, 21 did the bulk of their research in America—and those 21 came from 18 different institutions. These included seven public universities in five different states (California, Colorado, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Utah); an equal number of private universities (Caltech, Columbia, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, MIT, Stanford, and Yale); and research laboratories public (Fermilab, NASA) and private (Woods Hole, Bell Labs).

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And while Nobel Prize winners are a tiny if high-profile group, examining broader measures yields an even starker picture of American predominance. When major physics institutions are ranked by citations per paper—a statistic meant to emphasize quality of research over quantity—18 of the top 20 are American, including four separate campuses of the University of California. In chemistry, the U.S. has 13 of the top 15. In molecular biology, the U.S. has 6 of the top 10 by citations per paper, but 9 of 10 by total citations.

This American free-for-all contrasts sharply with the situation in most European countries. The most centralized and bureaucratic system is found, unsurprisingly, in France. Imagine scientific research as run by the SEIU, and you'll have an idea of what French science is like. Most scientific personnel—including researchers at all levels, technicians, and administrators—are civil servants with lifetime tenure. Rigid hierarchies ensure that young researchers pay their dues before moving up the ladder to supervisory roles, which is why so many of them leave France for the U.S. When France's scientists are not marching in the streets to demand more money, they are marching in the streets to protest any reduction in their privileges.

The dirigiste Paris government decides what areas of research are high priorities, which laboratories will be "centers of excellence," and how many people will be hired in what fields. It also classifies France's top educational and research institutions as *grands organismes*, *grands établissements*, and *grandes écoles*, with bureaucratic strictures ensuring that there will be little contact between the different groups. The result: While the home of Pasteur and Curie still produces plenty of excellent science, France's eight Nobel Prizes in the last quarter century add up to less than half of America's per-capita rate.

In Britain, private charitable trusts play a greater funding role, but there, too, government policymakers do their best to concentrate money and excellence in a handful of institutions. For example, in the last three decades, half of Britain's Nobelists in medicine or chemistry did their research at a single place: the Medical Research Council's Laboratory of Molecular Biology, in Cambridge. As is true in most of the world, American-style private universities are virtually unknown; most universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, have some degree of autonomy but rely heavily for funding on the central government, which controls tuition rates and other policies. This makes them highly susceptible to political pressures, economic fluctuations, cronyism, and all the other ills that accompany government spending—including the fact that governments can't choose winners or predict future developments in science any better than they can forecast the economy.

The same is true, with local variations, in the rest of Europe (and Japan as well): The central government allocates money, sets priorities, establishes guidelines, and develops plans and projections, deciding which institutions and which areas of research will be looked upon with favor. With the EU taking an increasing role in research funding, the red tape has only gotten stickier. As you'd expect, the EU prefers cross-border projects that give a piece of the pie to as many member states as possible, and its procedures are even more convoluted than those of the national science bureaucracies. One Euroscientist compares an EU grant application to a very expensive lottery ticket: It takes about a year of full-time work from a senior scientist to prepare, but if it is successful, the payoff is a huge pile of money.

To be sure, public and private research grants in the United States are subject to many of the same problems. But America's profusion of funding sources makes it easier for researchers with good ideas to shop around and find a willing partner. The states play a key role in this: In 2004, when California was unhappy with federal restrictions on the funding of stem-cell research, it allocated $3 billion of its own for the purpose; in 2007 Texas allocated $3 billion for a cancer-research initiative. And it's not limited to the big boys: State universities in places like Iowa and Utah have achieved outstanding research records in science and technology. Americans can consider themselves fortunate that except for the service academies, there is no system of national universities.

Another structural advantage is that American universities, with wealthy private institutions setting the pace, fund young scientists generously. Harry Witchel, an American-educated senior lecturer in physiology at England's Brighton and Sussex Medical School, says: "The start-up funding for a promising new faculty member at a good U.S. university can be on the order of $300,000 to $500,000, which is enough to have two or three top employees for three years. Those sums of money are only available in the U.K. for very senior, very successful academics." Witchel points out that "the U.K. is first in the G8 on scientific productivity, with almost 32 papers recorded for every billion dollars of GDP." Yet because British university endowments are small, with education seen as the government's responsibility, a young researcher is lucky to get one-tenth as much as she would in America.

As long as our federal and state governments recognize the importance of scientific research and are willing to finance it through economic ups and downs (in tandem with private sources, of course), America will keep developing and attracting top scientific talent and will remain at the forefront of discovery. Equally important, though, is America's vigorous economy, which supports science through public and charitable channels and encourages research by private companies; a mobile and entrepreneurial scientific workforce; and competition at every level—within institutions, between institutions, and between states, federal agencies, and military branches. All these factors benefit from the absence of any federal Department of Science and Technology—despite the assumption in many quarters that if something is important, it must have its own cabinet secretary.

Will America stay number one? Prof. William Happer of Princeton University, a physicist who was director of energy research at the U.S. Department of Energy in the early 1990s, is unsure: "It is true that biomedical research is funded like nowhere else in the U.S., but I don't think we do as well as Europe in non-biomedical science funding like physics or chemistry. And China is really coming on strong." (Happer, an anthropogenic-global-warming skeptic, does point out that "the last time I checked, we also outspend any other country in the world on climate-change research.")

Happer's tenure at DoE coincided with the department's attempt to build the Superconducting Super Collider, which foundered in Congress on its high cost. For funding big-ticket items like that, Europe and China may hold the advantage; they're good at spending lots of money with little squawking from the citizens. Yet while Happer calls the SSC's demise "a tragedy for science," he cautions: "I would rather accept mistakes made by the people or their elected representatives than live with mistakes made by scientific bureaucrats." America's hodge-podge of scientists, institutions, and funding agencies—imperfect though it may be—is the closest thing the world has to a free market in science, and the results can be seen in Nobel Prizes, citations, and the steady influx of researchers from abroad who know that the United States is the land of scientific opportunity. **NR**

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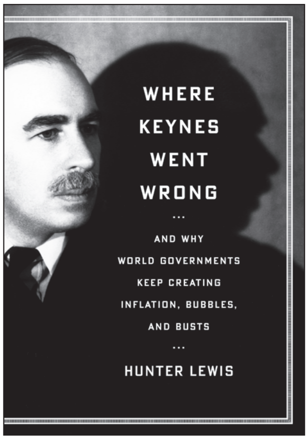

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Trust Science

As, indeed, you already do

BY JOHN DERBYSHIRE

> *The ninth commandment is: trust science. By this we mean a true science, based on objectively established criteria and agreed foundations, with a rational methodology and mature criteria of proof . . . Science, properly defined, is an essential part of civilization. To be anti-science is not the mark of a civilized human being, or of a friend of humanity.*
>
> —PAUL JOHNSON, *ENEMIES OF SOCIETY* (1977)

WELL, of course we all *do* trust science. We trust Bernoulli's principle every time we get on a plane; we trust celestial mechanics when we take the kids outside to watch a scheduled lunar eclipse; we trust the theories of relativity when we consult a GPS gadget; we trust natural selection when we fret about drug-resistant disease strains; we trust molecular biology every time we pop a pill. Our trust in science is well-nigh unbounded. We hardly draw a breath without trusting science. Paul Johnson's injunction would seem to be superfluous.

It sounds less so, of course, in the context of leaked e-mails from the Climate Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia. The scientists who generated those e-mails have all been helping to promote the anthropogenic climate-change thesis—the notion that humanity faces some great climatic catastrophe if we don't radically change the way we use energy.

What of that thesis? Is the Earth's climate changing to humanity's dire detriment, or isn't it? If it is, are the changes due to human activity, or aren't they? In either case, is there anything we can do about it at acceptable cost and with minimum chance of unforeseen harm?

As best I can judge, our planet probably *is* enjoying a long-term warming trend, though with much local variation, and temporary lulls and reversals sometimes lasting for years. That these changes are manmade is not proven. The argument that they are rests largely on theories about the overall effect of changing CO_2 levels; but those theories themselves are open to reasonable doubt. There is even more doubt about the consequences of any change that might be happening. Such science as we have thus far is an unacceptably flimsy foundation for multi-trillion-dollar economic transformations.

And the science is heavily polluted by politics. Climate-change catastrophism has been taken up by the Western left-intelligentsia, their heads stuffed with all the sub-Marxist and ethno-masochist flapdoodle of the modern academy. They hate capitalism, they hate Western civilization, and they hate their own ancestors. The kind of dramatic social engineering implicit in the phrase "combating climate change" is emotionally appealing to them.

Downstream from these ideologues are opportunist politicians eager to ride the climate-change wave to power and wealth. These pols control government departments that hand out grants and jobs to ideologically friendly researchers, further corrupting the scientific process.

Nor is climate-change *skepticism* free of politics. There are big, rich, powerful interests hostile to aspects of the climate-change cult: the fossil-fuel lobbies and the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China), for example. Given the stakes, it would be astonishing if they did not have their own paid shills in the game.

Somewhere under that political scrum is a rugby ball of scientific truth, and which side will get possession at last is beyond my ability to figure. I can, though, point out a number of general truths that are worth bearing in mind when relating this present flap to the larger business of science:

1. SETTLED VS. UNSETTLED SCIENCE

THE EXAMPLES in my first paragraph are all settled science—theories sufficiently well tested and robust that we can be confident they model the real world to high accuracy. These theories have no competitors. You can, of course, always find a contrarian, even on such thoroughly settled topics as heliocentrism or relativity, but no working scientist is losing any sleep over their arguments. Contrarianism in this zone is a social and psychological (occasionally psychiatric) phenomenon, not a scientific one.

Science is a lighted clearing in the forest. Beyond the well-lit central area is a penumbra of more or less shadowed ground. Beyond that is the infinite dark domain of our ignorance. Scientists toil to enlarge the lighted area—the zone of settled science. This is the science Paul Johnson wants us to trust. This is the science that we *do* trust. Beyond it, though, in the penumbra, there is dimness enough for all kinds of malarkey. This is the preferred playground of ideologues, politicians, and crooks. This is where the climate-change battles are being fought.

2. Trust Science, But Don't Trust Scientists

Scientists are human, with the same weaknesses, failings, and fixations as the rest of us. Most science research goes on in the universities of the Western world, where the dominant ideology is the leftist, anti-Western one noted above. Math and science people, most of whom are not very politically engaged, breathe in the atmosphere of the academy, and it poisons their blood, the more easily just *because* they don't think about it much.

Conservatives, always suspicious of bossy technocratic elites, are sometimes tempted to side with the underdogs, the contrarians. In general, this temptation should be resisted.

Scientific fraud is common enough. There have been many famous cases. Eugenie Samuel Reich's book *Plastic Fantastic* describes a recent one. An important thing to remember here is that practically all scientific cheating is done to "improve" results the researcher believes to be true, not to put over something he believes to be false. (Gregor Mendel, the father of modern genetics, has been accused of "improving" his data in this way.) It follows that, as reprehensible as the behavior of the CRU e-mailers surely was, by itself it tells us nothing about the truth or falsehood of climate change.

Science contains a core magisterium, which we can and do trust. In the penumbra of unsettled science, it is wisest to withhold trust—and major government-directed upheavals—until the smoke of battle has cleared.

3. Consensus vs. Contrarians

For theories solid enough to be part of the magisterium, contrarianism is out at the social fringes, as noted. In less-settled areas, the contrarians themselves are working scientists, able to challenge the consensus data on its own ground.

This is certainly the case with climate science. At the website Petition-Project.org, for example, you will find more than 31,000 American scientists who think that:

> There is no convincing scientific evidence that human release of carbon dioxide, methane, or other greenhouse gasses is causing or will, in the foreseeable future, cause catastrophic heating of the Earth's atmosphere and disruption of the Earth's climate.

Conservatives, always suspicious of bossy technocratic elites, are sometimes tempted to side with the underdogs, the contrarians. In general, this temptation should be resisted. Contrarians do indeed sometimes turn out to be right, but that's not the way to bet. Consensus exists for a reason, and a consensus *should* put up spirited resistance to being overthrown. When the orbit of Uranus violated the Newtonian consensus, astronomers did not discard Newton. Instead they went looking for a previously unseen body disturbing the data, and found the planet Neptune.

Contrarians should be made to fight for their victories. If they have truth on their side, they will eventually win and become the new consensus. Kepler, Newton, Lavoisier, Faraday, Darwin, Pasteur, Planck, Einstein, Hubble, and Wegener are not revered for their defense of a consensus. As Planck noted, contrarianism is a young person's game. Older scientists may settle for tenure, rank, political patronage, and a quiet life, but there will always be younger ones ready to fight the contrarian corner.

4. The Mills Grind Slow

You may say: "That's all very well; but plainly we need some better method for weighing the claims of contrarians against the claims of the consensus." Perhaps we do, but don't hold your breath waiting for it. It takes nine months to have a baby; there's no shortcut. Nor is there any way to shorten the process by which scientific truth emerges—a process at least as messy and painful as parturition, and lasting a great deal longer. It took *300 years* (Copernicus to Bessel) to resolve the issue of stellar parallax, the last serious flaw in heliocentrism.

* * *

Slow as they grind, the mills of science deliver the goods at last. And what goods they are! Compare the amenities of our lives now with those of our ancestors. Compare, too, the world-wide condominium of shared understandings—the *detribalization* of thought that science has brought about. Time was, not so long ago, that educated people in Beijing, Bombay, Berlin, and Bogotá had different creation myths, different explanations for natural phenomena, different treatments for bodily failings. Now we all share the same knowledge of the natural world.

Those are the accomplishments of science, modern Western civilization's great gift to humanity. To turn against science would be folly, a lurch back towards superstition, tribalism, and barbarism. For a person of the West to turn against science is also cultural treason, a form of ethno-masochism as shamefully deplorable as the postmodernist rejection of reason and language that has poisoned the faculties of arts and humanities in our universities. "To be anti-science is not the mark of a civilized human being, or of a friend of humanity," says Paul Johnson. I completely agree. **NR**

KEVIN DIETSCH/UPI

Shifty Shifting

Our changeable attorney general doesn't do law; he does politics

BY ANDREW C. McCARTHY

'THIS," said Eric Holder, "is almost a 'Trust me' thing." The attorney general of the United States was trying to reassure Alice Hoagland, whose 31-year-old son, Mark Bingham, lost his life with the other heroic passengers who wrested control of Flight 93 from four suicide hijackers on Sept. 11, 2001. Al-Qaeda's likely target was the U.S. Capitol, and, eight years later, Holder was at that same Capitol, attempting to justify treating acts of war—the deadliest ever committed on U.S. soil—as mere crimes.

In November, Holder announced what he insists is his own decision to vest Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four other jihadists with the constitutional rights once enjoyed by Mark Bingham and the nearly 3,000 other Americans they massacred. The Obama administration is transferring this al-Qaeda quintet from military custody at Guantanamo Bay, where they've been held as enemy combatants and charged as war criminals under the authority of a congressionally approved military commission. They will be brought to New York City, where, in what used to be the shadow of the Twin Towers, they will be swaddled in the Bill of Rights at a civilian trial in a majestic Manhattan courthouse. That courthouse is the epicenter of the law-enforcement approach to terrorism regnant in the 1990s while Holder served as the No. 2 official in the Clinton Justice Department—a time when nearly as many terrorists were pardoned as prosecuted, while al-Qaeda serially attacked U.S. interests.

Alice Hoagland had flown in from California to hear Holder explain himself to the Senate Judiciary Committee. She intercepted him as he was making his way out of the hearing room. After hours of Holder's uneven, unconvincing, and occasionally uninformed testimony, Hoagland was badly in need of reassurance. Composed but clearly disturbed, she told the attorney general, "I take great exception to your decision to give short shrift to the military commissions." So do dozens of the 9/11 victims' family members, along with millions of Americans who have seen the video of Holder's dreadful performance.

Holder is better in one-on-one situations than he is in confrontational testimony. A native New Yorker who grew up in bustling East Elmhurst and studied hard to earn his way into Columbia Law School, Holder is unfailingly polite and down-to-earth. The first thing one hears from his friends—and he has many, spanning Washington's partisan and ideological divides—is that he is a warm and genuinely nice man. But

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"genuinely nice" is not the same as "genuine." This same Eric Holder is a sharp-elbowed political animal and an inveterate careerist. He is also a member in good standing of the international Left's legal vanguard. However earnestly delivered, his assertions about the benefits of civilian trials for war criminals—like his explanations of other controversial events that have marked his career—make logical sense only through the prism of politics. He often is at sea when fielding rudimentary legal questions, and his record suggests that you cannot be sure that what he says today is what he'll be saying tomorrow.

"There are reasons why bringing this case in an Article III court, when it comes to the admissibility of certain evidence, is really the right way to go," he told Hoagland. This sort of empathy-wrapped shrewdness works well with non-lawyers and credulous reporters. They are instantly put on the defensive when veteran litigators lace their chatter with legalese like the "admissibility of certain evidence" (translation: "There are technicalities here that you wouldn't understand, regarding matters I'm not at liberty to discuss") and "Article III courts" (translation: "those presided over by independent federal judges, in contrast to military judges, who are part of the executive branch"). On a roll, the attorney general added that the "admissibility" of this "certain" evidence "really maximizes our chances of getting a successful outcome." Persuasive though it sounds, this is nonsense.

The hurdles for admitting evidence are lower in military commissions, and the government's ability to protect classified information is greater. More to the point: A year ago, 9/11 architect Khalid Sheikh Mohammed announced that he and his four co-conspirators wanted to forgo their commission trials, plead guilty, and proceed to execution. As Sen. Jon Kyl (R., Ariz.) pointed out during Holder's testimony, it is impossible for the chances of a successful prosecution to be "enhanced in Article III courts" when the accused have already "asked to plead guilty before a military commission and be executed." But instead of taking the guilty pleas, and despite the fact that three combatants had already been convicted in commissions, the Obama administration suspended military trials then under way for 21 war-crimes suspects, including the 9/11 five.

Like the rash announcement that Guantanamo Bay would be closed by January 2010 despite the absence of any plan for dealing with the 200-plus detainees lodged there, this act of disdain for military adjudication was driven by ideology and politics, not by law and analysis. It was designed to vindicate Obama's attacks, in the run-up to the 2008 election, on post-9/11 counterterrorism practices. Holder was then serving as an Obama campaign adviser and angling to be attorney general. He argued that treating jihadists as wartime enemies had been "needlessly abusive and unlawful" and charged that Bush officials had "secretly detained American citizens without due process of law, denied the writ of habeas corpus to hundreds of accused enemy combatants, and authorized the use of procedures that violate both international law and the United States Constitution."

But campaign rhetoric eventually gave way to the realities of governing. Releasing detainees en masse would have been political and practical suicide, but trying most of them in civilian courts is impossible—the evidence against many of them consists of foreign intelligence and non-*Miranda* interrogations. Suddenly, the Obama administration found that it wasn't so urgent to close Gitmo. Suddenly, wartime detention without trial for enemy combatants wasn't such a bad thing after all. Suddenly, Holder concluded that military commissions are fully appropriate—but not for the worst war criminals, the five 9/11 jihadists who, a short time ago, stood ready to conclude their cases at the end of a noose.

We have been at war with Islamist terrorists for over eight years now—about half as long as they have been at war with us. In that time, they have committed all manner of atrocities. But of the thousands of jihadists who have been killed, captured, or detained since 2001, the 9/11 plotters stand out. To submit them to the civilian justice system makes a mockery of the war, betrays its victims, and turns the American courts into a weapon by which the enemy can gather intelligence and broadcast propaganda. It is inconceivable that civilian trials would have been permitted in any previous American war. In those conflicts, war was understood as the military and diplomatic resolution of a geopolitical dispute, not the judicial disposition of a legal controversy.

But the Obama administration views the war as a legal matter. And its maneuvering to insulate the president from this unpopular ideological decision has been comically transparent: The president was, conveniently, en route to the Far East when Holder announced the civilian-court transfer; the White House maintains that the decision was a call for Holder alone to make (in fact, the attorney general has no authority to order war prisoners out of military custody—that's a presidential call); and Holder purports not to have consulted the commander-in-chief on this momentous matter, instead seeking the counsel of his wife and his brother.

To further the myth of a fully detached Obama, the administration projects a fully engaged Holder, hitting the books, agonizing for long hours over the most difficult decision of his career. But at the hearing, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R., S.C.) exploded the myth by asking the most elementary legal question: What is the precedent? "Can you give me a case in United States history," he asked, "where an enemy combatant caught on a battlefield was tried in civilian court?" After several seconds of excruciating silence, Holder stammered, "I don't know, I'd have to look at that." What, pray tell, *has* he been looking at, if not that? Senator Graham, an experienced Air Force lawyer, informed the nation's top law-enforcement official that there has been no such case.

Holder was equally adrift on the policy implications of his decision. What happens, Senator Graham continued, if we capture Osama bin Laden tomorrow? Does he get *Miranda* warnings, a defense lawyer during his interrogation, and a civilian trial? A flustered Holder answered, "That all depends." Even as he disputed Graham's contention that he was "criminalizing the war," Holder demonstrated that he was doing just that. The government, he explained, had neither "the desire [nor] the need" to question bin Laden because "the case against him at this point is so overwhelming." It apparently did not occur to Holder that United States might have an interest in doing something with bin Laden other than prosecuting him—for instance, interrogating him about ongoing plots. That, presumably, is Dick Cheney stuff—the sort of thing that was done with KSM, with the result that many Americans are alive today who might otherwise have missed the spectacle of his civilian trial.

THE elevation of politics over duty, coupled with a willingness to say almost anything in order to defend this elevation, is vintage Holder. As deputy attorney general, he engineered President Clinton's last-day pardon of Marc Rich, one of the FBI's most-wanted fugitives for nearly two decades, a man indicted for millions of dollars in fraud, tax evasion, and trading with the enemy (Iran). Grilled by Congress about the resulting scandal in 2001, Holder copped only to poor judgment in failing to inform himself of Rich's nefarious record. He swore that in 1999 "Mr. Rich's name was unfamiliar to me" when the fugitive's powerhouse lawyer, former Clinton White House counsel Jack Quinn, beseeched him to lean on federal prosecutors to dismiss the case. Even though the DOJ's rigorous pardon process is overseen by the deputy attorney general himself, Holder claimed to have "gained only a passing familiarity with the underlying facts of the Rich case" in the ensuing months, during which time he helped Quinn skirt DOJ's pardon regulations—and kept the application secret, preventing prosecutors from weighing in against clemency.

Describing Holder's actions as "unconscionable," a congressional investigation called his testimony dubious and self-serving. It was worse than that: The committee failed to appreciate that in 1995, when he was U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, Holder had investigated Rich. Not only did his office file a civil complaint documenting its familiarity with Rich's crimes, his underlings conducted extensive negotiations with Rich's lawyers, even taking the highly irregular step of obtaining an affidavit directly from the fugitive. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported on April 13, 1995, Holder himself bragged about the $1.2 million settlement he extracted from Rich's Swiss trading company, Clarendon Ltd., which had won lucrative U.S. contracts by concealing Rich's controlling interest in it.

The elevation of politics over duty, coupled with a willingness to say almost anything in order to defend this elevation, is vintage Holder.

So unfamiliarity was not the issue. Holder did Rich's bidding for the crassest of reasons. First, the boss wanted it done. Rich's ex-wife, Denise Rich, had poured a fortune into sundry Democratic causes, including the Clinton Library and Hillary Clinton's Senate campaign. Second, Holder hoped to be named attorney general in a Gore administration, and Quinn—a Gore confidant—was in a position to help make that happen. Holder had cultivated Gore from the start of his tenure at Justice, using his influence to squelch the appointment of an independent prosecutor to probe the vice president's violation of campaign-finance laws. Given Holder's history of political favors, how surprised should we be by reports that the Justice Department recently shut down a New Mexico federal grand jury's investigation of corruption allegations against an important Obama ally, Gov. Bill Richardson?

Rich's wasn't the only controversial pardon. Worse were those of Puerto Rican terrorists, which violated the most basic Justice Department guidelines. The FALN had carried out more than 130 bombings against American targets, killing six people and wounding many others. They weren't exactly penitent: One operative explained to the sentencing judge, "You say we have no remorse. You're right." Federal pardon rules require contrition, but the FALN terrorists were not only devoid of regret, they had not even sought clemency. Holder processed applications on their behalf anyway, ignoring protests from prosecutors and victims' families. Holder also ignored the criticism of FBI director Louis Freeh, who predicted that the move "would likely return committed, experienced, sophisticated, and hardened terrorists to the clandestine movement." As former Clinton political guru Dick Morris has observed, the FALN pardons were designed to enhance Hillary Clinton's appeal to New York's large Puerto Rican population during her Senate bid. Holder's support gave President Clinton a fig leaf of Justice Department approval, and when Congress demanded an explanation, Holder stonewalled, claiming executive privilege.

Only months before the FALN commutations, when jihadists had killed over 200 innocent people in the bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the Clinton administration boasted of its unshakable antiterrorist resolve. The pardons showed the insincerity of that posture. They also set the precedent (there's that word again) for Clinton to pardon two Weather Underground terrorists, Susan Rosenberg and Linda Sue Evans, on the same day he pardoned Rich, only three months after al-Qaeda killed 17 American sailors on the U.S.S. *Cole*.

This insouciance about mortal threats to the United States had the Democrats scrambling after 9/11. As Bush went to war rather than to court, reversing Clinton's policy of counterterrorism-by-subpoena, Democrats anxiously put on the airs of national-security seriousness. Into the breach stepped Ol' Reliable, Eric Holder. In a series of 2002 interviews on CNN, the former deputy attorney general declared that the nation was "in the middle of a war" and that it should detain enemy captives as combatants for as long as it took—"until the war is over." He specifically rejected the notion that al-Qaeda operatives have rights under international law: Terrorists, he said, "are not, in fact, people entitled to the protection of the Geneva Convention." After all, he explained, "we clearly want to . . . have an ability to interrogate them and find out what their future plans might be, where other cells are located." As for Guantanamo Bay, though he'd never been there, Holder blasted "those in Europe and other places who are concerned about the treatment of al-Qaeda members," suggesting that they "should come to Camp X-ray and see how the people are, in fact, being treated."

But the political winds soon shifted, and the ever-accommodating Holder shifted along with them. Like many white-shoe law firms, Holder's Covington & Burling took up the defense of

America's enemies with an unseemly passion, donating its high-priced services to at least 18 enemy combatants. As his partners joined the burgeoning al-Qaeda Defense Bar, railing against military detention and military commissions, Holder changed his tune. The same Gitmo he had defended was now "an international embarrassment." It had to be closed, he told the left-leaning American Constitution Society in June 2008, because "a great nation should not detain people, military or civilian, in dark places beyond the reach of law." And never, he declared, had he believed he'd see a day when the "Supreme Court would have to order the president of the United States to treat detainees in accordance with the Geneva Convention."

A few months later, at his confirmation hearing to become attorney general, Holder testified that waterboarding was everywhere and always torture. (His predecessor, Michael Mukasey, had jeopardized his own confirmation by refusing to concede as much.) Holder has since reopened six-year-old investigations against CIA interrogators that were closed by prosecutors—another unpopular decision that the president purportedly had nothing to do with. Holder's Office of Professional Responsibility is pursuing ethics probes against Bush-administration lawyers whose memos justified harsh tactics; at the same time, his Justice Department has quietly filed a brief urging the federal courts to adopt the Bush administration's legal construction of torture. Holder has conceded in testimony that even if waterboarding caused pain severe enough to satisfy the legal definition of torture (it doesn't), it would still not meet the definition if, as in the case of the U.S. military's waterboarding of trainees in counter-interrogation courses, the government's primary motive was not to torture the victim. Obviously, a motive to glean life-saving intelligence rather than to torture would have the same legal ramifications. But Holder doesn't do law; he does politics.

Politicized law enforcement has real consequences. It paralyzes the intelligence community, whose operatives can only conclude that their superiors' assurance that they are acting legally will be worth nothing when they face a retaliatory investigation after power changes hands. It undermines the "rule of law"—a phrase that, for Holder, is a verbal tic but not much else. The public sees that there is one standard of justice for the politically connected, a lesser one for most everybody else, and a chilling one for the president's political adversaries. A Justice Department mired in politics forestalls accountability: It can talk all day about "transparency" even as Congress's inquiries are parried or ignored.

In the matter of KSM & Co., politicized justice undermines humanitarian law and rewards the worst sort of depravity—all for the sake of settling political scores. While the 9/11 attackers move up to a bells-and-whistles civilian trial, the Obama administration is keeping military commissions for lesser jihadists, such as the *Cole* bombers. Holder's decision thus gives terrorists in the military system the powerful argument that their consignment there is arbitrary. At the same time, the message to our enemies is: Attack military assets and get military justice, but murder civilians and you win gold-plated due process.

The Manhattan courthouse is the stage KSM has craved since the day of his capture in Pakistan six years ago. His transfer there virtually guarantees a lengthy, difficult trial—the jihadists' lawyers have already announced that they will plead not guilty, that they will wear their crimes like a badge of honor and use the forum to attack American policies. At a minimum, the terrorists will have a couple of years to sift through sensitive government files that will be discoverable under civilian rules. In the military system, the government could have assigned a lawyer with a security clearance to screen accused war criminals from raw intelligence; in civilian court, they will have the right to represent themselves and to review discovery without attorney interference.

The terrorists' presence in New York will present a heightened security risk. The last time al-Qaeda was in Manhattan for a trial (the embassy-bombing case), one terrorist attempted to attack the judge in court, and another maimed a prison guard in an escape attempt. Moreover, bringing KSM here undermines the rationale for keeping less notorious jihadists at Gitmo, substantially increasing the likelihood that federal judges will eventually order trained terrorists released within our borders.

Why invite all this when the 9/11 plotters were ready to plead guilty? On the campaign trail, Holder promised the Left a "reckoning." The new administration would hold the Bush administration to account for its purported crimes. Understanding the legal emptiness and political explosiveness of such a promise, however, Holder has been reluctant to do more than "investigate." Thus the restless international Left—which includes Obama's core of support—has exhorted the United Nations and foreign tribunals to invoke "universal jurisdiction" to bring war-crimes charges against Bush officials. In Europe this spring, Holder expressed his willingness to cooperate with such investigations, including one ongoing in Spain.

A civilian trial for KSM & Co. will be an unparalleled coup for these efforts—more so even than the mounds of classified memos Holder has already made public over the strenuous objections of current and former CIA directors. The Left's shock troops at the Center for Constitutional Rights, who worked on our enemies' behalf with many lawyers now staffing Holder's Justice Department, will exploit any new revelations to intensify calls for foreign prosecutions. The Obama administration will get credit for delivering on its promised reckoning but will avoid the political damage that would result if DOJ were to bring the case itself.

Or maybe not. Maybe Eric Holder just thought a civilian trial for KSM was the right thing to do. After all, this is really a "Trust me" thing. **NR**

Politicized law enforcement has real consequences. It undermines the 'rule of law'—a phrase that, for Holder, is a verbal tic but not much else.

Lani’s HEIR

The new, old racial ideology of the Holder Justice Department

BY ABIGAIL THERNSTROM

Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson has called Eric Holder “the most destructive member of Barack Obama’s Cabinet.” The description is apt. The attorney general’s questionable judgment extends far beyond the high-profile decisions involving the trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and the dismissal of charges against members of the New Black Panther Party who engaged in blatant voter intimidation at a Philadelphia polling place.

In recent months, Holder’s putatively post-racial Justice Department has agreed in three cases to proportional-representation systems as a remedy for violations of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. All three cases involved section 2 of the statute.

Section 2, as amended in 1982, made jurisdictions nationwide vulnerable to suits challenging voting procedures that were said to have a discriminatory result. A discriminatory result, it turned out, was evident whenever minority candidates were not elected in numbers roughly proportional to the minority population. Where minority officeholding is disproportionately low, the electoral power of black and Hispanic voters has been “diluted.”

The Justice Department (as well as private parties) can initiate section 2 suits. Full-scale trials are relatively rare; more often jurisdictions settle out of court. They cannot afford stiff legal fees, and litigation involving sensitive civil-rights issues is seldom worth its political cost.

A wrong requires a remedy, and the standard remedy for vote dilution has been single-member districts carefully drawn to create safe black or Hispanic legislative seats. Minorities are entitled to districting that gives them representation proportionate to their population, the Supreme Court held in 1986. But safe minority seats are an imperfect means to that end. The alternative methods of voting—the real proportional-representation systems—adopted in three recently settled cases are a much better bet.

There is nothing inherently undemocratic about PR systems; many countries, as well as a small number of scattered American communities, use them. But, in its seeming enthusiasm for their much wider adoption, the Justice Department risks further heightening the importance of racial identity in American elections and encouraging raw racial appeals—especially by black candidates trying to mobilize black voters.

Lani Guinier must be smiling. Remember her? Sixteen years ago President Clinton was forced to withdraw her nomination as assistant attorney general for civil rights when her radical views on voting rights and minority representation came to light. Those views were too much even for a left-leaning Democratic administration. But Obama is not Clinton. The radical views that Clinton felt compelled to disavow when they became public have become part of the package of “change we can believe in.”

At the time of her ill-fated nomination, Guinier was a professor of law at the University of Pennsylvania. (She later moved to Harvard.) Her extensive writings addressed what she called a “fundamental flaw in our democracy”: methods of election that do not ensure that minorities will hold a number of legislative seats proportional to their share of the population. Blacks, in her view, were still “systematic losers in the political marketplace,” but losers could become winners by abandoning an illegitimate system in which—and here she was quoting a student—those who are “outvoted . . . don’t count.”

They could become winners, in her view, if no legislation could pass without the support of a majority of minority representatives—an updated version of John C. Calhoun’s notion of concurrent majorities. The Holder Justice Department today is not pushing for concurrent majorities, but it is surely on Guinier’s page in believing that whites still have excessive power and that black elected officials are, as she argued, “inauthentic” unless “community based” and the first choice of black voters. Blacks elected with essential white support are thus not true representatives of black interests.

In 1996, Holder told the *Washington Post* that he always carried a favorite quotation in his wallet. A black man’s “race defines him more particularly than anything else,” it ran. Said Holder: “I am not the tall U.S. Attorney, I am not the thin U.S. Attorney. I am the black U.S. Attorney. . . . There’s a common cause that bonds the black U.S. Attorney with the black criminal or the black doctor with the black homeless person.” All blacks share a “common cause,” and thus, methods of election that give them proportional legislative power are a moral imperative.

Guinier’s radical translation of that moral imperative—her insistence on true PR methods of voting—was politically unacceptable in 1993. But through the 1980s and 1990s, with the exception of some political appointees in the George W. Bush administration, the commitment to maximizing black legislative power through the use of racially gerrymandered districts was unwavering. As Robert Driscoll, a deputy assistant attorney general in the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division from 2001 through 2003, put it: “The problem with the DOJ voting section is that, regardless of what is published on the website or said out loud, what they want is proportional representation. You could have whatever evidence you want about crossover voting, turnout figures, you name it—but if the number of black representatives is ‘too low’ for the jurisdiction in question, you have a problem with the DOJ.”

For more than two decades, the drawing of race-conscious single-member districts has been the standard means of achieving that proportionality when the level of minority officeholding has been found to be unacceptably low. But, in the best of

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circumstances, race-driven maps "waste" black votes. Inevitably, many black voters end up in majority-white districts and find themselves represented by a white—which is to say without representation, by the Guinier and Holder definition.

The three systems to which the Justice Department has recently agreed are assumed to be much more likely to guarantee true proportionality. They have involved school-district elections in Euclid, Ohio; town-commissioner elections in Lake Park, Fla.; and trustee elections in Port Chester, N.Y. These were towns in which, despite a significant minority population, no blacks or Hispanics had been elected to public office. The Justice Department had filed suit, and, given the absence of elected minority representatives, there was no chance the towns could successfully defend their methods of election.

Was Lake Park a racist town? The DOJ painted a boilerplate picture of socioeconomic disparities and blacks' and whites' tending to vote for different candidates; it even threw into the list the presence of "gated communities" that impaired "the ability of black candidates to campaign and be elected."

But what really mattered, as the quotation from Robert Driscoll made clear, was a black voting-age population of 38 percent and an all-white governing commission. Driscoll, who then served as Lake Park's attorney, hoped the town would litigate, but it was not willing to do so. In the words of Baird, litigating would be "David vs. Goliath without David being armed at all."

The question of a remedy boiled down to two bad choices, given the statutory demand for racially fair election "results." Lake Park could replace its town-wide ("at large") voting with single-member districts drawn to ensure some safe minority seats, or it could institute some sort of proportional-representation system. The first option was a non-starter. Local officials objected to carving up their towns into wards. In Lake Park, with a population of only 9,000, turnout for elections had been running roughly 10 percent. Thus, "38 people in a single-member district could decide who would sit on the commission," town attorney Thomas Baird noted.

So, beginning with municipal elections in March 2010, Lake Park will use a "limited voting" system—one in which voters will be limited to casting only one ballot, although they will be electing commissioners to four seats. That is, any number of candidates might be running town-wide for the four openings, but voters will be forced to pick their one favorite. If black voters are united behind a single black candidate, he or she is bound to win. A mere quarter of the electorate can determine who gets one of the seats. And the elected whites will be free to think, *No blacks voted for us, we owe blacks nothing, we can ignore the one black on the commission.*

IN Euclid as well, in a settlement between the Justice Department and the school district, three seats will be filled by voters who may cast only one ballot for their top choice among the candidates running. In the Port Chester settlement, however, a federal judge imposed a "cumulative voting" scheme—a slightly different proportional-representation system and one that is generally considered hard for voters to understand and use effectively. Six trustee positions will be open at one time, and voters will have six votes. They can divide them between candidates in any way they choose. If one Hispanic is running, Hispanic voters can decide to use all six of their votes on that candidate. If they do so, considerably less than a sixth of the electorate will determine the winner of one of the six seats, provided members of other groups do not also use all their votes to elect their top choice.

Will this plan achieve its goal of empowering minorities? It's a more reliable means of achieving proportional representation than the current system of race-conscious single-member districting, which the Justice Department has called the "presumptive remedy" for minority "underrepresentation." But it's still not certain to succeed. The system is "a gamble," Jon Greenbaum, a former DOJ litigator who is now with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, has said.

Indeed, in Euclid, black turnout for the school-board elections on November 3 was too low to secure the election of the black candidate; white incumbents won all three available seats. Participation is crucial in proportional-representation systems. The population of Port Chester is 28,000, 46 percent of whom are Hispanics. But they are only 22 percent of the citizen voting-age population. If they want a Hispanic on the board, they need to turn out in full force and throw their full support behind one candidate.

Proportional-representation systems are "a gamble," but the Obama Justice Department seems likely to stress their advantages in the coming years. They solve a host of problems. In 1986 the Court had assumed that majority-minority single-member districts were the obvious remedy for methods of voting that "dilute" the power of blacks and Hispanics. Just last March, the Court held that single-member districts with only a minority of black voters are not an acceptable voting-rights remedy, even in settings with substantial and reliable white crossover voting. But the insistence on majority-minority districts assumes that most whites will refuse to vote for black candidates. And such districts can be drawn only if blacks and Hispanics are residentially clustered. Cumulative voting and limited voting dispense with districting altogether—and thus circumvent the Court's increasingly outdated decisions.

Inevitably, many black voters end up in majority-white districts and find themselves represented by a white—which is to say without representation, by the Guinier and Holder definition.

In addition, proportional-representation systems would be a preemptive strike against a possible Supreme Court attack on racial gerrymandering. Chief Justice John Roberts has already expressed skepticism about the constitutionality of "divvying us up" by race, which he has called "sordid business." If limited and cumulative voting become an established part of the American electoral landscape, however, the Justice Department will be free to insist on those methods of voting in jurisdictions electing too few minority officeholders by the standard of proportionality. Without obvious race-driven district lines, the divvying up by race will be better hidden.

For opponents of divvying up by race, cumulative voting and limited voting have superficial appeal. As voting-rights scholar Richard Pildes has argued, they allow voters to "voluntarily define their own interests and the voting affiliations that best promote them." Single-member districting plans imposed as voting-rights remedies allow group stereotyping by judges and bureaucrats to replace self-definition.

It's a nice theory: proportional-representation systems' encouraging more black voters to define themselves by qualities other than race. Fewer Eric Holders ("I am the black U.S. Attorney") and more Ward Connerlys. But it's unlikely to happen.

More probable is a heightened emphasis on race by black candidates who depend on black voters' thinking about racial identity as Holder does—and even more stress on the importance of race by DOJ attorneys who have long assessed the level of black representation by counting blacks in elected office. In this case, we will be stuck with race-drenched politics into the indefinite future.

Michael Carvin, one of the nation's foremost voting-rights litigators, puts the point well: "Cumulative voting and limited voting enshrine forever race-based legislative seats. Blacks and Hispanics will not see themselves as part of an integrated whole and vote accordingly. There will be color-coded voting into the future as far as the eye can see."

Reserved legislative seats that depend on geographical racial clustering are self-limiting; they can be drawn only as long as blacks do not become substantially residentially integrated. Not so with proportional-representation systems, and Carvin sees, as a next step, an end to single-member districts even for the election of members of the House of Representatives. With the substitution of cumulative or limited voting, racial gerrymandering in a new form will become a permanent part of the legislative landscape.

Even if geographically based districts were to remain the American way of electing representatives, race would not disappear from American politics. But as Duke law professor Donald Horowitz testified at 1982 hearings on the Voting Rights Act, it is wrong to structure methods of election so that race has "everything to do with voting behavior" and "political ethnicity ultimately smothers democratic choice and threatens democratic institutions." And that is precisely what PR methods of voting do.

The Voting Rights Act was supposed to integrate American politics—with politics as the key to closing the larger divide. Perhaps the Justice Department could keep that in mind as it contemplates proportional-representation systems as a remedy for voting-rights violations in the coming years. **NR**

VAT Attack

Will the Democrats enact a new kind of tax to pay for their bender?

BY RAMESH PONNURU

THE U.S. has a smaller government than most rich countries do, but we don't have much lower corporate tax rates or top income-tax rates. That's one conclusion to be drawn from a paper on the history of world taxation by American Enterprise Institute scholars Kevin Hassett and Aparna Mathur. Most developed countries have cut their corporate tax rates over the last two decades, and our rates are now among the highest in the developed world (adding state and federal corporate tax rates, we're second only to Japan). Our top income-tax rates are only slightly lower than the rich-country average. Most other developed countries have, in short, managed to build larger governments than we do without leaving their citizens with smaller incentives to save and invest.

They have done it by relying on value-added taxes, called VATs. And that, in a nutshell, is why VATs are suddenly attracting a lot of interest in Washington, D.C.: They're seen as a way to raise a lot of revenue while doing little damage to the economy. But introducing a VAT is also considered politically risky. Whether the Obama administration tries to do it will depend on just how badly it wants the extra cash.

A VAT is a tax on consumption. But it is not administered as a sales tax, for two main reasons. When sales-tax rates climb into the double digits they generate serious compliance problems. And in practice sales taxes often apply to business-to-business sales, which can have such perverse consequences as inducing companies to integrate solely to reduce tax payments.

A VAT is levied at each stage of production, with credits given for the taxes paid at previous stages. So a lumber company pays a tax when it sells wood to a pencil manufacturer; then the pencil-maker pays a tax when it sells the pencils to a chain of stores, but gets a credit for the taxes that the lumber company already paid; then the store pays the tax when it sells the pencil to a customer, but gets a credit for the taxes paid in the first two rounds.

Economists generally agree that the VAT is an efficient tax: Other taxes do more damage to the economy per dollar of revenue they raise. Because the income tax applies in many cases to returns on investment, it biases consumption decisions toward today rather than tomorrow; and because returns compound, it is even harder on consumption the day after tomorrow. It creates an incentive to spend now rather than add to the capital stock. A consumption tax doesn't: It is neutral with respect to time. An additional source of its efficiency comes from the way it reaches previously accumulated capital as it gets consumed. Enact a VAT now, and the buying power of your nest egg will fall. But you can't go back in time and work and save less in response to the tax. By some estimates, replacing the current tax code with a consumption tax would, over time, add 10 percent to the nation's economy.

Proponents of a VAT frequently argue that it would shrink the trade deficit because importers would pay it while exporters would get rebates. Alan Viard, who has studied the issue for the American Enterprise Institute, says that this type of "border adjustment" would make it easier to administer a VAT for internationally traded goods, but thinks it doubly mistaken to hope for an effect on the trade balance: There is no good reason to favor exports over imports, and in any case a VAT would cause the dollar to appreciate and thus cancel out the pro-export effect.

It is mainly the VAT's potential as a revenue-raiser that has piqued Democratic interest. Every few weeks a small trial balloon floats up. In May, a spokesman for the administration's budget director mentioned it. In June, the chairman of the House committee on taxes, Rep. Charlie Rangel, said, "It's been put on the table." In September, John Podesta, who ran Obama's transition, talked up a VAT on television, citing its effect on revenue and its alleged effect on competitiveness. In October, two influential liberal think-tankers, Henry Aaron and Isabel Sawhill, wrote an op-ed urging Congress to enact a VAT that would take effect as soon as the economy recovers. Doing so, they argued, would itself promote recovery, since people would want to make purchases before the tax kicked in. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said that "it's fair to look at a value-added tax."

Two former Fed chairmen have also made supportive comments. Paul Volcker said that he would prefer to see spending cuts but that a VAT or a carbon tax might be necessary in their absence. Alan Greenspan also said he would prefer spending cuts, but that a VAT would be "the least worst way" to raise revenue. A similar thought process has led right-leaning economic journalist Bruce Bartlett to drop his opposition to a VAT and become a crusader for it.

Anti-tax activist Grover Norquist is preparing to campaign against a VAT. "When you listen to the patter on Japanese radio traffic and they keep mentioning Pearl Harbor, you begin to see a pattern. . . . They keep blurting out, 'The VAT.'" He assumes that a push for a VAT is coming because it's the only way that liberals can finance their plans for bigger government.

BUT there are a lot of political hurdles in the way of a VAT. Liberals often oppose consumption taxes as insufficiently progressive: They tax the consumption of the rich at the same rate as that of the poor, and the poor consume a larger percentage of their income. The government could send everyone a large check to defray taxes on the basic necessities of life, but that would still leave the rich and the middle class paying roughly the same share.

Conservatives worry that a VAT would be too easy for the government to raise once it was in place. Economists Gary Becker (a Nobelist) and Casey Mulligan have done research suggesting that the more efficient a tax, the easier it is to increase. This may be especially true when the tax is hidden from most people. In Europe, quoted prices typically include the tax. Even if they did not, people wouldn't keep track of the taxes: American consumers don't add up how much they pay over the course of a year in sales taxes. Fear that a VAT would fuel the growth of government would make most conservatives wary of it even as a replacement for today's income and payroll taxes. They will be even less likely to support it as an additional tax.

Senior citizens might fight against VAT proposals. Having been taxed during their working lives on the income they made, they may not be eager to pay additional taxes as they spend their savings. Since seniors receive gargantuan subsidies from younger people, for the government to take some money back might not be the worst injustice in the world. But seniors do vote at high rates.

There are other complications, too. A VAT should lead to wage cuts, because it is, in part, a disguised tax on wages collected by firms. (To look at it another way, firms can't deduct their wage costs when calculating the tax and pass some of the burden to their employees.) If wages do not drop—if they prove "sticky downwards," to use the jargon—then unemployment will rise. One way around this problem is for the Federal Reserve to inflate the money supply so that wages can stay flat on paper while declining in value, but this solution has obvious drawbacks.

While he hopes that political circumstances have changed, Bartlett has noted in *Forbes* that politicians who have proposed VATs have often seen their careers end soon afterward. Al Ullman, one of Rangel's predecessors, lost his reelection bid after advocating a VAT. Leaders in Canada and Japan have lost their jobs after introducing VATs.

A crisis might suspend the normal political rules. Hassett outlines one scenario. The Democrats raise top income-tax rates but the extra revenue take is disappointing. The government's creditors start worrying that it might default and start a run on the dollar. A plummeting dollar then leads Congress to pass a VAT as an emergency measure to reassure creditors. Nobody doubts that VATs can raise money.

It is possible to smooth the jagged edges of the VAT. The late David Bradford, an economist at Princeton University, proposed a variant called the X tax. The difference is that under the X tax businesses would be able to deduct wages and workers would pay taxes on their wage income. The wage tax could be made as progressive as Congress wants, making the X tax more attractive to liberals. It would also be more visible to voters, making it more attractive to conservatives. And wages wouldn't have to fall.

Economic analysis alone can't answer the most important questions about a VAT. Some of those questions are moral: How progressive should the tax code be? Many of them are political: How much progressivity must a proposed tax code have to be politically viable? How much would a VAT expand government, and how should we weigh that effect against the tax's efficiency? Could Washington be trusted to levy a uniform tax rate, as economists wish, or would special favors encrust the VAT as they do today's tax code?

Greenspan's argument for a VAT depends on the most important political judgments of all: Is spending reduction so improbable, and is deficit reduction so important, that even conservatives should support big tax increases? Like most conservatives, I'm inclined to say no. It's worth noting that at no point during the Republican ascendancy did liberals ever give up on the idea of tax increases, given Republican and public resistance, and start pushing instead for spending cuts.

Republicans should not react to Democratic rule with a tit-for-tat strategy; but they should drive a smart bargain. If the Democrats want Republicans to support any sort of tax increase, it's up to them to propose a deal that includes serious spending cuts: an increased retirement age, or a change in Social Security's benefits formula. With nothing of the sort on the table, for conservatives to talk up a VAT as the least-worst tax increase would be to negotiate with themselves. That's never a good idea. **NR**

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Smart Luxuries—Surprising Prices

PRICELESS Is Worthless

In health care, education, or bonds, the price is (metaphysically) right

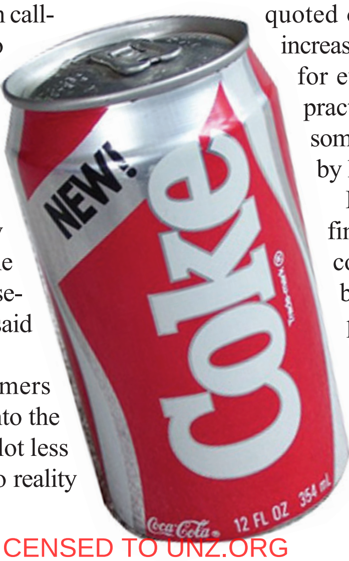
BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

MasterCard is right: Some things in life are priceless. Those are the things that don't work. If you care about something—health care, education, a clean environment—put a price on it.

Prices are, or should be, objects of awe and wonder, a mystery to be meditated upon. They are not mere intersections of supply and demand curves, the predictable $19.99 of late-night infomercials: Prices are the Paraclete of the market economy, the mystical intercessor between producers and consumers, making possible miracles of information management and economic coordination that could not otherwise be accomplished. Prices are the epistemological movers and shakers of community life, transporting knowledge instantly and frictionlessly, coordinating the actions of a shipyard in Virginia with those of a steel mill in China, directing global flows of capital, letting clueless executives in Atlanta know that New Coke is a fiasco.

That last bit of Cold War history is worth thinking about: When it hit the market in 1985, New Coke was the most highly engineered, polished, researched, lovingly refined, focus-grouped, test-marketed product of its time. (Socialist governments aren't the only organizations that find their central-planning efforts nullified by the market, which is to say, by reality.) The Coca-Cola Company had everybody from food scientists to psychiatrists working on what they codenamed, in the military-industrial style, Project Kansas. All the best minds told them New Coke was going to be a smashing success, but prices said otherwise: They found that they could not give New Coke away. The price of Old Coke, if you could find it, skyrocketed. Consumers began to spend extraordinary sums of money—to pay very high prices—to import "The Real Thing" from overseas, and an organization calling itself "Old Cola Drinkers of America" was able to raise $120,000 to lobby Coca-Cola for a return to the original formula. Price spoke loud and clear. So poorly regarded was the new product that, in some cities in the South, where Coke is considered an item of particular cultural importance, revanchist cola conservatives paid full price for bottles of New Coke for the sole purpose of emptying them out in the streets as an act of protest. Sales tanked, orders nosedived, regional bottlers revolted. Coke's brain trust said "X," but prices said "Not X." The price was right.

It took a little trauma to get there, but consumers prevailed, and New Coke followed Communism into the dustbin of history—for similar reasons, but with a lot less bloodshed. The Coca-Cola Company had to bend to reality more quickly than the Marxist-Leninists did. Prices are, among other things, a snapshot of the relationship between what producers are selling and what consumers want. That relationship, though intangible, is a reality, as real as gravity or a skyscraper or a case of pancreatic cancer.



To compare the contemporaneous declines of New Coke and Soviet Communism from 1985 to 1991 is not to engage in frivolity. As F. A. Hayek noted, the great problem facing central-planning regimes like that of the Soviet Union is that there are no prices to facilitate communication between producers and consumers. The tales of Communist-era production misalignments would be comical if they had not exacted such a high price in human suffering: There would be huge surpluses of, say, pesticides (not to mention tanks and rockets and ideology) but acute shortages of sugar, flour, shoes, and other common items. Toilet paper was used as filler in sausages until that homely commodity itself went into short supply. Burglars would break into houses and steal everything but the money—there was no point in taking it, as there was little or nothing to buy. (That might have changed during the toilet-paper shortage.) For the Soviets, there were no real prices, so there was no feedback loop between producers and consumers: If we'd had that model for soft drinks, we'd still be drinking New Coke, and the cola executives in Atlanta would be strutting around in their nifty military uniforms, with epaulets and braid, telling us to drink our New Coke and like it, because they had determined, RATIONALLY, that this is what we want. A good rule of thumb: Fear the man who says he will make things rational by ignoring reality—and ignoring prices is ignoring reality.

Unhappily, there are sectors of the American economy that are almost as lacking in meaningful prices as those old Soviet shops were. And where the epistemological labor performed by prices goes undone, you may be sure that dysfunction and unhappiness will follow. Most of the occasions that find us lacking good prices are the result of political manipulation of the economy—the allegedly rational government planner overruling prices—but not all of them are. Up until about a decade ago, for example, NASDAQ traders indulged a curious habit of quoting stock prices only in quarter-dollar amounts even though they were actually calculated in amounts of one-eighth of a dollar. (This was back in the pre-decimal Dark Ages of the 1990s.) So a stock that might be offered at one and one-eighth dollars ($1.125) would end up being quoted on the market at one and a quarter ($1.25), increasing the traders' profits. It was a terrible system for everybody but the top dealers and, when the practice was exposed and discontinued, spreads on some high-volume stocks, like Microsoft, dropped by half.

But you don't have to go to Wall Street to find prices being hidden and distorted, with ugly consequences for consumers. One of the most bothersome examples is the lack of price transparency in medical procedures.

A few years ago, needing a medical procedure, I conducted an experiment, partly out of curiosity and partly out of dread of dealing with the insurance bureaucrats who are theoretically paid, by me, to provide me with an

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OTHERS have reported similar experiences. And even with insurance, it is well nigh impossible to find out in advance how much you will be charged for a particular procedure. Going into a doctor's office for some common blood work, which was covered by my insurance, I tried, very diligently, to discover what I would be charged. "It depends," the receptionist told me. I had the numbers in front of me: My deductible was X, my co-pay was Y, etc. So, "What's the damage?" She: "I don't know." I called Alice in insurance. She didn't know.

Health-care prices are a mishmash for lots of reasons, but one of the main ones is the way we pay for health care—you don't pay the doctor, your insurance company does, an arrangement that gives at least two of the three parties involved a good incentive to obscure prices, so that the consumer has no idea how good or how rotten a deal he is getting while the insurers and hospitals attempt to game and swindle each other. Given the shocking and terrifying size of serious medical bills—my mother's last stay in the hospital billed out at $360,000 (that's a Ferrari 612 Scaglietti for Doc X plus a BMW 5-Series for one of his brats)—the American health-care consumer, quaking in his paper hospital slippers, no longer even asks: "What does this procedure cost?" He only asks: "Does my insurance cover it?" No prices, no negotiation, no mystical coordination between producer and consumer—instead, maddening and expensive and often underhanded mediation by the insurer.

Medicine is complicated; computers are complicated, too, but you can call Dell or Apple or Best Buy or whomever and ask: "What does this sort of computer cost?" and you will receive an answer. And then, when you get to the store—miracle of miracles!—that will be the price. Computers are damned complicated to make, with programmers in the United States and India collaborating with Taiwanese microchip fabricators, Dutch LED manufacturers, Irish customer-support agents, etc. You can get a price on an iMac, but you can't get a price quote on an ingrown toenail.

If I may make a populist-credibility-destroying admission, I live in New York City and I take yoga classes. Yoga is a super-competitive business in New York—there's big money in sweaty enlightenment. Signing up for a series of classes, I was surprised at the specificity of the prices and the number of options available: There's one rate for a one-off class, a discount for buying ten classes at once, another for a month's or a year's worth of classes. You can elect to bring your own yoga mat or to rent one, or to buy your own but have the studio store and clean it for you for a fee. There is a menu of options for towels, lockers, etc. I counted nine major variables that could be combined in various iterations to determine the final cost of a yoga class, with about 2,000 different possible combinations of those options. The yoga jock working the front desk at my studio does not, I would guess, enjoy quite as generous a neurological endowment as Doc X but, unlike Doc X, he could tell me what things would cost. He had the prices right there in front of him: Magic! I suspect that health care would cost less, and that Americans would be much less anxious about it, if rotator-cuff surgeries were priced as transparently as yoga classes or computers or Oreo cookies.

But rather than bring price transparency to health care, we're going full-tilt boogie in the opposite direction, specifically by insisting that insurance companies be barred from putting real prices on preexisting conditions. Set aside, if you can, all those images of poor little children with terrible diseases being chucked out into the Dickensian streets by mean old insurance executives in top hats and monocles, and think, for a second, about what *insurance* means, and what a *preexisting condition* is. Insurance is, basically, a bet: The insurer calculates the probability that a certain unhappy condition will befall a consumer. Actuarially speaking, the number of people who will suffer heart disease or car accidents is fairly predictable within a very large pool, so the insurer can figure out roughly what it will have to pay out in a typical year for every 100,000 policies, and the premium will incorporate that number. But *predictable* applies to things that happen *in the future*. Maybe 3 percent of those 100,000 people will need to see a cardiologist in a given year, but 100 percent of the people with diabetes will suffer from diabetes. That's a fact: It's what *preexisting* means.

Unless Governor Schwarzenegger manages to invent Terminator insurance, whereby Allstate agents travel back in time to insure you against problems you haven't developed yet, you cannot *insure* against something that *already has happened*, and to pretend otherwise dumps a whole metaphysical can of worms all over the insurance space–time continuum, landing us in an alternative universe where Insurance = Not Insurance. You'd never take a bet that you knew you were going to lose, right? Insurance companies won't do that, either, unless they get paid to do so—specifically, unless they are allowed to charge at least as much for covering Preexisting Condition X as it's going to cost them to treat Preexisting Condition X. Ignoring the reality of prices—waving the magic wand and saying: "There shall be no price put on preexisting conditions"—does not solve the problem. Health care

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Israel: A Light unto the Nations

Those who demonize Israel are either misinformed or malevolent

If that proverbial man from Mars came to visit and read the world's newspapers, especially those in the Arab and Muslim world, he would be convinced that Israel was the most evil nation in the world and the source of all of the world's strife.

What are the facts?

A nation to be emulated. The reality, of course, is that Israel is a nation, a society, that should be admired and emulated by many countries in the world. The very fact of how the State of Israel came into being is one of the most inspiring in history. Born out of the ashes of the Holocaust, it has emerged as one of the most advanced, productive and prosperous countries in the world.

The demonization of Israel, assiduously cultivated by the Muslim world, has reached a crescendo following Israel's recent defensive action in Gaza. Instead of being grateful to the hated Jews for having totally withdrawn, the Palestinian Gazans showed their gratitude by almost daily pounding Israeli towns with close to 10,000 rockets and bombs. After countless warnings, Israel ultimately decided to put an end to this travesty.

> "As the prophet Isaiah presaged: Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations."

When Israel finally did invade Gaza it took the most elaborate precautions not to hurt civilians. As a first in the history of warfare, Israel dropped tens of thousands of leaflets, warning the population and urging it to abandon areas in which military action would take place. The Israeli military made thousands of phone calls urging people to leave areas that would come under attack. But fighting in a densely populated environment is difficult and loss of civilian life is hard to avoid. Hamas fighters wear no uniforms. It is impossible to tell them from civilians. Is a person who allows a rocket launcher in his backyard a civilian or a fighter? And how about using schools, hospitals and mosques as munitions depots and staff centers? The hue and cry of Israel's demonizers in accusing it of "disproportionate force" is totally absurd. The ultimate insult, comparing Israel to the Nazis, is freely bandied about by Israel's detractors.

Israel is not an "apartheid state." Another familiar tack of Israel's vilifiers is to call it an "apartheid state," on the model of former South Africa. But that is so ridiculous, so preposterous, it is hard to believe that serious people can countenance it. The exact opposite is the case. Israel is the only country in its benighted neighborhood in which people of all colors and religions prosper and have equal rights. Israel, expending substantial effort, rescued tens of thousands of black Jews from Ethiopia. And it has given assistance and absorbed countless Christian expatriates from Sudan, who escaped from being slaughtered by their Muslim countrymen. Israel's over one million Arab citizens enjoy the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows. They are represented in the Knesset, Israel's parliament, and are members of its bureaucracy, of its judiciary, and of its diplomatic service.

All over the world, Leftists, including in the United States and, sad to say, even in Israel itself, tirelessly condemn and vilify Israel. Why would they do that? First, of course, there is good old-fashioned anti-Semitism. Second, many of those who hate the United States vent their poison on Israel, which they consider being America's puppet in that area of the world. But Israel should certainly get top grades in all areas important to the Left. In contrast to all its enemies, Israel has the same democratic institutions as the United States. All religions thrive freely in Israel. Also, in contrast to all of its enemies, women have the same rights as men. The Chief Justice of Israel's Supreme Court is a woman. One-sixth of the Knesset are women. Compare that to Saudi Arabia, a medieval theocracy, where women are not allowed to drive cars, where they cannot leave the country without permission of a male relative, and where they can be and often are condemned to up to 60 lashes if the "modesty police" deems them not to be properly dressed in public. Gays and lesbians are totally unmolested in Israel; in the surrounding Muslim countries they would be subjected to the death penalty.

In spite of demonization and vilification by so much of the world, Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations. The State of Israel is the foremost creation of the Jewish enterprise and Jewish intellect that has benefited every country in which Jews dwell, certainly our own country, the United States. Second only to the United States itself, Israel is the world's most important factor in science and technology, way out of proportion to the small size of its population. Israeli Jews are at the forefront of the arts, the sciences, law and medicine. They have brought all these sterling qualities to bear in building their own country: Israel. By necessity, they have also become outstanding in agriculture and, most surprisingly, in the military. What a shame that the Arabs opted not to participate in this progress and this prosperity and chose instead the path of revenge, of Jihad and of martyrdom. As the prophet Isaiah presaged: Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations.

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costs money. The price is right, and you cannot politically engineer your way out of that reality, no matter how many sickly toddlers you parade around on CNN.

HEALTH CARE consumes 17 percent of GDP and the cost is growing at 10 percent a year; we spend about $7,000 per capita on it. Is there anything else you're spending seven grand a year on but can't get a price for? Yes, there is, now that you're heavily invested, through your government, in the financial-services industry, with a diverse portfolio of craptastic positions in mortgage-backed securities, wobbly insurance companies, zombie banks, etc. You'd think that Wall Street suits, of all people, would have been paying attention to prices. But they weren't. There were all sorts of pricing problems leading up to the financial crisis, the fundamental one being that the government wanted housing prices to keep going up but also wanted more and more people to buy houses, i.e. they wanted demand to rise with rising prices rather than to fall as prices went higher—which is to say, they wanted magical pixies to plant unicorn trees and fertilize them with faerie dust. We could cloak the effects of rising house prices for a long time—about 60 years, as it turned out—through all sorts of schemes, including the mortgage-interest tax deduction, artificially low mortgage-interest rates, and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac shenanigans.

Mortgages, like all loans, entail risk, and risk has a price, too, but we managed to find a way around that, creating a federally chartered cartel of credit-rating agencies—Moody's, Standard & Poor's, Fitch—that mindlessly applied the same formula over and over, slapping Triple-A ratings on securities. And it was the Triple-A rating, not the underlying security, that determined the price banks and other investors put on that risk. We inflated the price of houses, depressed the price of mortgages, and cloaked the price of the risks attached to doing so. But as even the Soviets found out, prices are not to be denied forever: The price of housing turned around, back down toward its normal, non–politically adjusted level, taking the price of mortgage-backed securities with it and sending the cost of borrowing, conversely, through the roof. Boom: financial meltdown. Turned out there was a lot of Triple-A toilet paper in our sausage. The lesson: Don't mess with prices!

So we messed with prices some more. Mark-to-market accounting, the rule that says that banks and other financial institutions must value all the assets on their books at the most recent market price, decimated (and then some) the capital of our banks. Interesting thing about mark-to-market: It creates imaginary prices. If Security A sells at Price X, everybody who owns Security A has to write it down on his books to Price X—even if there is no way in tarnation he'd actually sell it at that price. Think of it this way: For almost any asset, there will be times when distressed parties sell at a fire-sale price. A degenerate gambler may hock his wife's diamonds during a bad run in Vegas, but that does not mean that the folks at Tiffany's will start selling the same jewelry at the price the pawnbroker paid. Mark-to-market essentially turned the structured-finance markets into a Quentin Tarantino Mexican standoff, with every bank holding a gun to every other bank's head: In that situation, there were no real market prices for lots of those mortgage-backed securities, because everybody was too terrified to buy or sell and establish a theoretical price that, because of accounting rules that do not reflect economic reality, would require them to rebalance their books, to catastrophic results.

Prices do their thing because of the nature of economic information. Information basically comes in two flavors: You've got your for-the-ages, centralized, Library of Alexandria–type information, your Big Truths that are relevant at all times for all men. These are things like scientific knowledge and works of history, scholarship, philosophy, the grammars and lexicons of ancient languages—you know: stuff practically nobody ever uses. On the other hand, you have contingent, contextual information of the "Got milk?" variety. "Do I need to buy milk, and, if so, how much and what kind?" is an interesting question, because the answer is likely to be different every time you ask. How much milk you and your family need on any given day is likely to vary wildly: If you're whipping up some homemade ice cream for a summertime party, you will probably buy more milk than you usually do. If your fruity daughter goes vegan, you're buying less. Milk is complicated: Survey the magnificence of the dairy aisle! You have choices that are almost incalculable: 0.5 percent, 1 percent, 1.5 percent, 2 percent, skim, whole, organic, grass-fed, chocolate, strawberry, soy, lactose-free, half-pints and pints and gallons. Apply the whole range of choices to hundreds of millions of consumers making hundreds of purchases apiece over the course of a year and you have an information-management problem of a very hairy kind. No central planner, no matter how powerful or gifted, could predict Americans' milk needs in advance or coordinate them with producers. Prices do that.

But milk prices in the United States are not set by the market—they are set by milk-pricing bureaucrats, partly in the employ of the U.S. government and partly in the employ of Big Bessy. Now, we know for a fact that, given the billions of possible distributions in the dairy market, the allegedly rational planners who set milk prices are not evaluating American milk consumption and production in their full glorious complexity. So, how are they making their decisions? Nobody really knows, but the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimates that American families pay 26 percent more for milk than they would pay if they paid real prices, i.e. the prices set by a free market. Whoever's interest is being looked after, it isn't the interest of the guy on a tight budget staring down a dry bowl of Count Chocula. And as we continue to pretend that there is another unseen economic reality beyond market prices when it comes to health care, banking, housing, labor, cotton, sugar, fuel-efficient Japanese automobiles, solar panels, and every other product with prices distorted by politics—whose interests do you imagine are being served? Yours, chump?

In health care, banking, education, and other critical areas, Uncle Sam is putting his big ugly federal boot squarely on the neck of prices, choking off the lifeblood that allows economies to work efficiently and rationally: not *perfectly* efficiently, not *perfectly* rationally—that's the stuff of theoretical models and utopian visions—but making the best use of the best information we have. Lowering health-care costs will require consumers to comparison-shop between providers (insurers, doctors, hospitals, specialists) just as reforming Wall Street will require giving investors real prices for the risks they are bearing—and charging "too big to fail" institutions a real price for the subsidy they now collect from taxpayers. We cannot make intelligent reforms without real prices, because we are blind without them. But given that Washington has been setting the price of milk since the 1930s and shows no sign of giving it up, the chances of their taking up the Gospel of Price are slim. Let him with ears, hear. **NR**

The Long View

BY ROB LONG

TO: (undisclosedrecipients)@
InstitutiAstronomica.it
FROM: Cardinal.Bianchi@
InstitutiAstronomica.it
DATE: Dec. 6, 1632
SUBJECT: Housekeeping before the big Revolving Sun conference

Guys:

Please delete all e-mails you've got in re: the Sun's revolution around the Earth and our manipulation of the data to show that. I know it's tiresome and a pain in the you-know-what, but we're getting a lot of flak and pushback from a couple of nutjobs in the Round Earth Society, and it's just easier to wipe the data clean.

Also: I'm noticing that some of our recent measurements of the Sun's travel path seem to indicate that it isn't traveling, so please adjust those numbers accordingly. Feel free to use Massimo's trick of showing the dotted line, or drawing the Sun with whooshy marks around it to suggest speed, or just, you know, figure out where it should be setting according to our calculations and just say that it's setting there. My guess is that this is all going to blow over before the Revolving Sun Conference next week, but in case it doesn't, let's all try to sing from the same hymnal.

One last thing: PLEASE try your best to crunch all available data ASAP so I can give the Cardinal at Inquisition HQ a target date for the start of the End Times. He's really on my back about it, and even a rough guesstimate will do.

Thanks!
Card. Bianchi

TO: Cardinal.Bianchi@
InstitutiAstronomica.it
FROM: Galileo.galilei@hotmail.it
DATE: Dec. 9, 1632
SUBJECT: Wondering where the raw data is??

Hey Cardinal:

Thanks for speaking to me at the Revolving Sun conference last week in Siena. As I said then, I really don't want to be a pest. I understand that there's a general consensus re: the Sun revolving around the Earth, and of course I appreciate your perspective that "all respectable scientists" agree that it's the Sun that's moving around, but you know, for the life of me it really seems like it's the Earth that's moving.

I guess what would help is if I could take a peek at the raw data you guys have been collecting. Any chance of that?

Thanks!
Galileo

TO: Galileo.galilei@hotmail.it
FROM: Cardinal.Bianchi@
InstitutiAstronomica.it
DATE: Dec. 12, 1632
SUBJECT: RE: Wondering where the raw data is??

Dear Galileo:

As I mentioned at the conference, the raw data we've gathered was lost during a routine transfer from vellum to vellum. All that's available is our adjusted data, which as you can clearly see, definitively shows the Sun zooming around the Earth.

Which of course it must, because our Heavenly Father wouldn't allow it to be otherwise. Don't you agree?

Or are you one of those troublemakers who have a hard time accepting science?

I always forget these things, but is "Galileo" a Jewish name?

Please don't make me contact our friends at the Vatican.

Sincerely,
Cardinal Bianchi

TO: Cardinal.Bianchi@
InstitutiAstronomica.it
FROM: Galileo.galilei@hotmail.it
DATE: Dec. 13, 1632
SUBJECT: RE: RE: Wondering where the raw data is??

Sir:

Honestly, I hate to be a pain. I'm just trying to figure this out. From my observations, it really seems that the Sun just sits there, and it's the Earth that zooms around in an egg-shaped pattern. And while I appreciate the report you sent me—I particularly enjoyed the smiling Sun, being guided around the Earth by the hand of God—you know, in the spirit of scientific inquiry, I sort of need more info.

Look, I know we've all got a lot of political and social capital wrapped up in the whole Sun-revolving-around-the-Earth meme. But surely the truth is important, too?

Best,
Galileo

P.S.: Catholic mom, Catholic dad, whole family in the church, just FYI.

TO: (undisclosedrecipients)@
InstitutiAstronomica.it
FROM: Cardinal.Bianchi@
InstitutiAstronomica.it
DATE: Dec. 17, 1632
SUBJECT:

Gang:

We really need to hit back at the skeptics, hard. It's NOT helping that the numbers keep coming back so skewed. WHERE is the revolution?? We need to show some revolution ASAP!! Any way to massage some of that data to show revolution?

Bianchi

TO: Cardinal.Annuzio@
inquisition.vatican.org
FROM: Cardinal.Bianchi@
InstitutiAstronomica.it
DATE: Jan. 4, 1633
SUBJECT: Galileo's questions, Earth/Sun revolution, etc.

Dear Cardinal:

As we discussed last week, there have been huge questions about our data as regards the Sun's revolution around the Earth. Look, there will always be people who insist on seeing the "raw" data we've measured, and to be honest, they're just skeptics and troublemakers. The Sun revolves around the Earth and that's that. All of our data has been reformatted and hedonically adjusted to reflect that reality.

I wish I could be there when you guys have a "talk" with Galileo what's-his-name and clue him in. Please do what you have to do. I'm not sure I know what "we'll show him the instruments" means, but it sure sounds convincing! It's stubborn skeptics like that who give science a bad name.

Thanks!
Silvio

P.S.: According to our calculations, the End Times will begin promptly next Thursday. Just FYI.

The Bent Pin

BY FLORENCE KING

Silence Is Olden

The other day I got an anonymous letter from a reader of this column but it's not what you think. It contains no nukes or threats; rather, it is by turns sad and funny, and concerns a subject dear to my spleen. I wanted to answer it personally but it was signed "Anonymous Librarian" and contained no return address, so I will answer it here.

The writer explains that she always wanted to be a librarian because she loved the peace and quiet of the library of her childhood. "It was one of the few places where I ever felt safe," she writes, but today "the people I used to go to the library to get away from are in here with me . . . foul-mouthed teenagers, loud adults, musical concerts, screaming children, and a thousand-and-one cell phones a-ringing. No one is told to be quiet anymore because no one wants to make the patrons 'uncomfortable.'" Her local government is considering turning the library into a community center and instituting what one professor of library science has called "realia," i.e., "the library can own and lend out anything from books and movies to lawnmowers and barbecue grills." If that sounds far-fetched, it has already happened: She knows of one library that had a power mower that patrons could check out. (And, no doubt, test first.)

My correspondent has no hope that anything can be done; her letter is simply a cri de coeur: "What little intellectualism America ever had is almost extinct, and I fear that the library as I remember it is soon to follow. The problem with being a free government agency is that we change with the will of the people, and the people no longer care about having a peaceful and quiet place where they can study, think, read, imagine, and even create. They don't see it as necessary anymore."

References to "the will of the people" always remind me of my favorite Founding Father, Alexander Hamilton, who famously said: "The People! The People, sir, are a great beast!" He was right.

Actually it's a miracle that the library as a silent retreat ever lasted as long as it did because the great beast has been gunning for it for a long time. Think of very old movies. The scene opens on a hushed reading room full of industrious students and dedicated bibliomaniacs. Suddenly the handsome leading man or the glamorous heroine bursts in and creates a disturbance, whereupon all of the quiet people jump out of their skins and recoil in shocked disbelief that such a thing could happen in a library. This is supposed to be funny, and it invariably was. The audience always laughed, a bullying, ganging-up laugh—bark is more like it—as if to say "Serves them right!"

The point is more easily made now that "elitism" has entered the language and been applied to everything and anything that offends the great beast. Silence is manifestly elitist, suggesting the English gentlemen's club where the only sound is the squish of expensive leather, and deferential servants glide instead of walk, the better to serve drinks without clinking the glasses. To the great beast, people who want a quiet library think they are better than everybody else, while anyone who is naturally quiet must be putting on airs.

Requiring silence is now authoritarianism. The old library signs with the single word "SILENCE" would infuriate the great beast, who would rename the library the Third Reich and call all the librarians Nazis because the great beast is so ignorant of history that Nazis are the only bad guys they've ever heard of. It's too late to post "Thank You for Not Talking" signs. While they pulsate with democratic cooperation, they would defeat the purpose of today's libraries as meeting grounds—not for ideas, but for meetings. Sitting alone quietly and thinking is the way ideas get their start, but the great beast believes in "brainstorming," i.e., lots of people all thinking—and talking—at once. Convinced that a quorum of heads is better than one, they assemble ideas piecemeal in festivals of blunting and blurring that tend more and more to happen in public libraries.

There is no way we will ever have quiet libraries again, any more than libraries will ever put newspaper on sticks again. The newspaper on a stick was a symbol of order, and as with all order, a thwarting element was ever present. You couldn't tear anything out of a paper on a stick, or draw mustaches on the brides, or ball up a page with a loud crumple of disgust when you read something you disagreed with. You needed two hands for such activities, the same two you needed to hold a paper on a stick. The only way to free one of them for clandestine purposes was to press the stick handle firmly between the top of the thighs and squeeze it tightly to hold it in place while you did a bad thing behind your newsprint tent. This thwarted both male and female library patrons who, albeit for very different reasons, heeded the same warning: Don't try this in public.

Nowadays newspapers are tossed all over the periodicals room and every librarian has a sheaf of library-from-hell stories. One told me about going into the ladies' room and finding a homeless woman spread-eagled across the sink she was using as a bidet. Besides being a homeless shelter, her library is also a free day-care center; mothers drop off their kids in the morning and pick them up after work. One mother she confronted shot back, "Why not? It's public, ain't it?" Everything that can happen in a library has happened in hers, with one exception, which she expects any day now: A Muslim father will commit an honor murder in the Harlequin romance section.

People don't make noise in just one place. The great beast of the library also disrupts live shows in studio audiences, where the feral yelps of aboriginal cavalry charges have replaced mere applause. Far from being new, the sounds we tolerate today must have been the last thing Custer ever heard. **NR**

Florence King can be reached at P.O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, VA 22404.

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DAY/DATE	PORT	SPECIAL EVENT
May 12 (Wed)	Lisbon	Hotel check-in; day free
May 13 (Thu)	Lisbon	Tour of Old Town Lisbon and Jerónimos Monastery
May 14 (Fri)	Lisbon	Tour of Cascais & Sintra
May 15 (Sat)	Lisbon	Depart for Amadouro Coimbra City Tour (en route) Afternoon seminar, evening cocktail reception
May 16 (Sun)	Regua Pinhão	Morning seminar. Palacio de Mateus tour Gourmet dinner at Vintage House Hotel Late-night cigar smoker
May 17 (Mon)	Pinhão	Morning and afternoon seminars Afternoon Port wine lecture & tasting
May 18 (Tue)	Salamanca	City tour (all day) Late-night cigar smoker
May 19 (Wed)	Vega de Terron	Castelo Rodrigo tour. Afternoon seminar Evening cocktail reception Late-night Portuguese troupe performance
May 20 (Thu)	Lamego Bitetos	City tour. Afternoon seminar Dinner at Alpendurada Monastery Late-night smoker
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May 22 (Sat)	Porto	Debark

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by Matthew Continetti (Sentinel,
256 pp., $25.95)

When Sarah Palin was announced to the world as John McCain's vice-presidential running mate in summer 2008, she was almost completely unknown outside Alaska. She had made a few feisty appearances on television interview programs as a booster for Alaska and its energy resources since becoming governor in 2006. In October 2007, *Newsweek* had favorably profiled Palin and a Democratic woman governor, Janet Napolitano, as two western politicians who were "making their mark with a pragmatic, post-partisan approach to solving problems"—which makes her sound a little like a premature Barack Obama. She had hosted receptions for the editors of both National Review and *The Weekly Standard* when their respective cruises docked in Juneau. They were impressed by her lively charm and apparent soundness, but not to the extent of predicting that she would be an early contender for national office. Insofar as Sarah Palin had a national political reputation in mid-2008, it was that—thank you, *Newsweek*—of a moderate Republican reformer. But it was a very small reputation indeed. Most pundits and activists had little idea who she was, let alone what she was.

That changed within hours, even minutes, of her being selected as VP candidate. Suddenly everyone had not just a definite opinion about her, but a passionate and ineradicable feeling about her.

Many, perhaps most, ordinary Americans (i.e., those who are neither professional politicians nor professional journalists nor self-consciously professional in other fields) seemed to take an instant liking to her. She attracted immense crowds to her rallies with McCain. She even eclipsed McCain on these occasions—a turnabout that, to his credit, McCain apparently enjoyed. Initial polls suggested that she had struck a chord with many voters. According to public-opinion watcher Karlyn Bowman, she had gone over big with that third of American voters who claim "some college" on their CVs. Their instinctive affection was confirmed by her fine acceptance speech—possibly the most successful introduction of any American politician since Reagan's Goldwater ad in 1964—at the GOP convention.

All of this translated into an immediate surge of popularity for the Republican ticket. More interesting than its impact, however, was the nature of this response to Palin. Almost none of these new supporters were enthused by her political record; they had only the vaguest idea of what it was. So they must have been sparked up by the woman herself. They intuited something about her. But what? It seems to have been that she was "one of us." In that case, however, who were "we"?

That question was answered quickly, but not by the Democrats. Obama very shrewdly gave Palin a chivalrous welcome to national politics. It was the media and the wider academic-media-foundation complex that now sprang to the attack—only a little more slowly than Middle America had rallied to Palin's standard. Pundits, editors, anchormen, columnists, social critics, literary post-modernists, feminist theorists, post-structuralists—"Academics, actors who lecture / Apostles of architecture / Ancient-gods-of-the-abdomen men / Angst-pushers, adherents of Zen . . ." as Kingsley Amis listed the licensed rebels of an earlier age in his poem "After Goliath"—all discovered overnight that they despised Palin and all that she stood for even if they had only the vaguest idea of what she stood for. They too had intuited something about her: that she was not "one of us." Worse, as the cheers of the polyester crowds established, she was one of *them*.

The outpouring of bile and contempt for Palin from the academic-media-foundation complex over the next few months (and that continues to the present day) forms the subject of Matthew Continetti's forceful little book. His thesis is effectively summarized on page three, where he lists the sophisticated witticisms to which the intellectual elite has subjected Palin:

> She has been called a "freak show," a "joke," an "extreme liability," a "turncoat b*tch," an "insult," a "fire-breather," "xenophobic," a "sitcom" of a presidential choice, a "disaster movie," a "shallow" person, "chirpy," a "provincial," a "disgrace to women" who was "as fake as they come," [and so on for a couple hundred more words, culminating in] an "[expletive deleted] psychopath," a "religious fanatic and a proud boastful ignoramus," "political slime," a "mean brain-dead rat," a "bad mother" who "often seems proud of what she does not know," the "Carmela Soprano of the GOP," a "Drama Queen," a "Republican blow-up doll" who "ideologically" is "their hardcore pornographic centerfold spread," an "opportunist anti-female," a "true Stepford candidate, a cyborg," a "quitter," and . . . a "bon-bon."

Except for "bon-bon" (which really describes an aspect of Palin's personality), that long list is a tribute to the unhinging of an entire social class. Nothing in it bears any relationship to the real Sarah Palin or her actions in private or public. The constant striving after effect is wearisome. The abusive descriptions cancel one another out—the Palin they indict is a deeply religious whore, a bullying bimbo, a ruthless naïf, one of those dark blondes. There is not a single aphorism about Palin in that list (or elsewhere) that captures and destroys her through sharp and witty observation. These philippics are spluttered forth not to describe, analyze, refute, or even ridicule coolly, but instead to express a rage that is all the more painful for being incoherent.

In short, "bon-bon" really was the best that they could do.

That list only begins Mr. Continetti's explorations. A former NR intern, he is a graduate of the institutional network established by Irving Kristol, M. Stanton Evans, Tom Phillips, and others in separate endeavors over the last 30 years to encourage young conservatives to enter journalism. He and other graduates now staff Fox News, Regnery Books, and the *Examiner* newspapers, and they have sharpened the political reporting of conservative opinion journals. Continetti likes Palin and thinks she has a future as a major national figure. He also points out certain missteps in her record: Her "post-partisan" independence in Alaska, for instance, was built in part on forging alliances with Democrats and turning on Republican patrons for fairly minor infractions. (Needless to say, the Democrats forgot her alliance with them once she was nominated, while the Republicans remembered what they felt were her betrayals.) His portrait of Palin is, well, balanced in her favor. But she is the object rather than the subject of his book. Primarily he employs the orthodox techniques of reporting—in this case, checking allegations against Palin with multiple sources or with documentary evidence—against the "elite media" and their favored experts.

The results are devastating. Media organizations broke their own rules on covering the families of candidates. Reporters passed on absurd rumors launched on the Internet. Columnists had hysterical fits. Here, for instance, is Naomi Wolf in *The Huffington Post*: "Under the coming Palin-Rove police state, you will witness the plans now under way to bring Iraqi troops to patrol the streets of our nation." And even this outburst seemed relatively calm in comparison with Andrew Sullivan's constant demands that the McCain campaign provide evidence to disprove the Internet rumor that Sarah Palin was passing off her daughter's baby as her own child. How could a writer as undeniably intelligent as Sullivan not grasp that evidence was needed to justify rather than to disprove such a very unlikely scandal? Well, according to his *Atlantic* colleague Megan McArdle, the reason is a medical condition afflicting almost all the media elite: Palinoia.

Most news coverage reflected this grave condition. By any reasonable expectation this barrage should have destroyed Palin. It certainly reduced her standing with some voters, notably independents, and probably those in all partisan groups who still trust the impartiality of the elite media. But it failed to crush Palin: She finished the 2008 campaign in fighting style, and polls today show that she has the approval and support of about 70 percent of Republicans. Given the recent embarrassments of Mike Huckabee, she is probably now the frontrunner for the Republican nomination, admittedly for a dim and distant 2012. This is a remarkable triumph over her press coverage.

To be sure, she has high "negatives" too. Americans seem to be divided into two groups: those who are misinformed about Sarah Palin—fully misinformed, one might say—and despise her; and those who are uninformed about her and adore her. Maybe it is time to become informed about Sarah Palin.

How well does *Going Rogue* inform us about its central character? Palin had the assistance of a gifted "ghost" in Lynn Vincent to put her words down on paper. But as an occasional ghostly presence myself, I judge either that Palin was present throughout the writing, or that her ghost has become very close to her, or perhaps both. The book sounds throughout just like Sarah Palin. Also, it's an autobiography and every autobiography should bear the subtitle "Not the whole truth." Yet it seems to be about as honest as an autobiography can be. I can write this confidently because, as Mark Steyn has pointed out, the Associated Press assigned no fewer than eleven Mary-Jo Factcheckers to make sure that the Alaska governor was not telling fibs. They discovered six utter trivialities, including that she has more "ambition" than she lets on. (So that's how she became a candidate for national office. Whodathunkit?) Finally, it's a very readable and entertaining book—far more so, I think, than most political memoirs.

It falls naturally into three neat sections—Palin's early life, marriage, and family; her political career in Alaska; and her 2008 vice-presidential campaign—with a codicil reflecting on her post-campaign life and resignation as governor.

Her account of her Alaskan political career will probably interest readers the least. Most of the political issues and figures mentioned are little known outside Alaska. Naturally enough, her opponents don't get their say in her autobiography—so it lacks the drama of cut-and-thrust. And it is written, somewhat romantically, as a thrilling "Jill the Giant Killer" tale of how Palin took on the GOP–and–Big Oil establishment on ethical issues and won. Still, these chapters are worth reading carefully. Between the lines they tell of how a talented outsider could ride to power by first working with insiders and then exploiting their ethical lapses to replace them. The insiders themselves made this easy for her by underestimating her political skill and judgment. She advanced by resigning, triangulated between her own party and the opposition, and made modest plans for an exit strategy by boosting Alaska to the rest of the U.S. All these worked well for her—though her triangulation created problems in the campaign and her latest resignation is controversial. This is not such a nice story as "Jill the Giant Killer," but it is a revealing one. There was a cool and skilled ruthlessness and determination underneath Palin's cheery boosterism that future opponents would do well to remember.

Palin's personal life was perhaps the main reason she was hated. On one hand, she exemplified everything that feminists had always insisted was true: She combined a successful career with a full and loving family life. On the other, she held all the wrong right opinions on the nuclear family, gay marriage, and, above all, abortion. Worse, she exemplified these opinions, too, by being happily (even lustfully) married, having a large family, and giving birth knowingly to a Down Syndrome child. Still worse, she was neither a religious bigot nor an intolerant homophobe, as progressive stereotyping demanded.

Many of the contradictory attacks on her arise precisely from anger at her combining all these things in a perversely normal life. Since she undermined the stereotyping of the cultural Left, she had to be shown to be (a) a whore, or (b) a bigot, or (c) a redneck mother from the Jerry Springer show, or (d) a politician so ambitious that she would pretend to be her grandson's mother, or (e) all of the above. Yet, most outrageous of all, she soared smiling above these calumnies.

Her book establishes why she can smile—but also why she is not all smiles. To begin with she has been blessed with a genuinely happy life, marred so far by very few tragedies. She was cursed by neither wealth nor real poverty. Her parents and family were close and supportive. She fell in love early and successfully. Her husband is one of those irritating guys that other men envy for their strength and courage and that women—well, see below. Their children have largely turned out well. They married somewhat poor, had some hard times, worked hard, succeeded in different occupations, and have now achieved financial independence and some fame.

This is a conventional American middle-class story of success built on solid foundations in a fundamentally open and decent society. Palin explains her early Republicanism at one point by saying that she felt Ronald Reagan was "one of us." He was a wealthy Hollywood star, but he incarnated small-town America. Many middle-class Americans think exactly the same about Palin.

George Orwell once remarked, however, that every life seen from the inside is a series of defeats. That goes too far; still, seen from the inside—and we have that experience in *Going Rogue*—Sarah Palin's life is a series of moral challenges. She admits that the Inner Palin does not always rise to them as easily as the External Sarah suggests. Most notably, she did not initially treat the news of her Down Syndrome child equably. She was frankly terrified. For a moment she considered quietly disappearing out of state for an abortion that no one would ever know about. She rejected the temptation, but it required some effort. In an almost despairing struggle to accept her baby, she turned at one point to her husband, Todd, and asked: "Why us?"

"Why not us?" he replied. He promptly set about talking to friends with "special needs" children to answer such practical questions as "Can they play baseball?" That will tell any woman all she needs to know about Todd Palin—the most important thing being the answer to the question "Can he be relied on?" It also helps to explain why his wife has been able to live out the feminist ideal of having it all.

Is this a book that settles scores from the McCain campaign? Certainly. But then there were ample scores to be settled. Palin chivalrously exempts McCain from any criticism of the treatment she received from the campaign staff appointed to protect him from her. In brief, though, they treated her—to borrow a famous British political line—as "a bloody legal necessity." Some of the staff—not all; Palin praises speechwriter Matt Scully to the heavens—started to view her as an intolerant scold. So they set about treating her as a rebellious ventriloquist's dummy who had to be kept away from all human contact except when allowed to speak from a script purged of any personal content. She was even prevented from delivering a concession speech and dressed down for suggesting such a novelty.

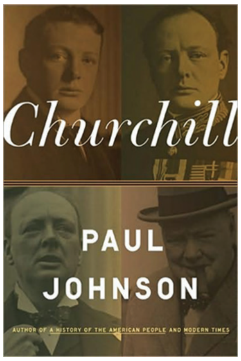
How accurate is all this? Well, I wasn't there. Maybe Palin exaggerates or distorts particular events. But the general picture rings horribly true. Political consultants and campaign experts on the right are best described by the old Soviet term of "candidate-members" of the political establishment. They are anxious to curry favor with its full members and have swallowed a diluted version of its doctrines. How else are we to explain Nicolle Wallace's advice that Katie Couric was to be preferred over Fox News as the conductor of a major Palin interview? It would be a libel on her professionalism to suggest that Ms. Wallace thought Couric likely to be a friendlier interlocutor. She seems merely to have felt more comfortable with Couric (a personal friend) than with the natural media allies of the McCain campaign. Something similar may explain the continuing phenomenon of anti-Palin conservatives. They have fought so many dinner-party battles over everything from the Cold War to marginal tax rates that . . . must they really annoy their next-door neighbors, saddle up one more time, and set forth to defend someone whom they would never have met except for the unfortunate legal necessity that she was a national GOP candidate?

Unless this kind of class sympathy is taken into account, the whole thing is a mystery. Still, as told by the unfortunate legal necessity, it makes for very entertaining reading. The campaign chapters are the best in the book—vivid, informative, full of personal color and slightly bitchy gossip. And they raise again the question: Was everyone on the campaign bus "one of us"? Or were some of them "one of them"? And, as the late Samuel Huntington memorably asked in the title of his final and perhaps most important book: "Who are we?"

That is, of course, the question that will determine Palin's future. **NR**

Walking With Destiny

ANDREW STUTTAFORD



Churchill, by Paul Johnson
(Viking, 192 pp., $24.95)

ONE of the most remarkable aspects of Winston Churchill's sprawling epic of a life was the way that he was able to cram it all in—to do all that—in a mere 90 years. It is only marginally less miraculous that Paul Johnson has now managed to make an excellent job of summing up that life—and, no less important, offer up a good measure of the man who lived it—in a book of a little under 200 pages.

This is not a "definitive" Churchill. For that, turn to the massive official biography begun by his son and taken to a triumphant conclusion by the indefatigable Sir Martin Gilbert. Nor is it a full-length (if not Gilbertian in size) work on the lines of Roy Jenkins's *Churchill* (2001), a fine, feline interpretation (Johnson rates it as the best single-volume account of Churchill's life) made all the more interesting for having been written by a man who had, like Churchill, been Britain's home secretary and chancellor of the exchequer, although not, mercifully (he was a socialist of sorts, and a Europhile of conviction), prime minister.

Paul Johnson's take is something else, a deft, brisk, admiring Life of a Great Man, a book for a country-house weekend, perhaps, crafted in vintage style and

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best read, I'd think, in the company of some vintage port. A distinguished journalist (and a regular NR contributor) and successful popular (in the best meaning of that term) historian, Johnson writes in a slightly archaic rhythm, a lavish, lively prose that is sometimes old-fashioned ("At this moment providence intervened") and occasionally orotund ("the two worked together to bring the great fleet of measures into harbor, wafted by the winds of their oratory"). This is an author who cares about narrative, and who relishes grand, sweeping (frequently, very sweeping) judgments, faintly irritating pulpitry ("It is a joy to write his life. . . . None holds more lessons, especially for youth"), well-chosen anecdotes, and neat, shrewd observations ("Churchill had always used clothes for personal propaganda"). The resulting mix comes as a rich treat after the dense jargon and denser preoccupations that characterize the efforts of so many contemporary academic historians. Readers looking for an attempt to squeeze Churchill into the straitjacket of early-21st-century attitudes will be disappointed, as will those looking for some rote revisionism, but then they probably should not have been reading Johnson in the first place.

Despite going a little easy on his subject over what were, at least arguably, his two most notorious (and very different) blunders—the Gallipoli campaign and his 1925 decision to put Britain back on the gold standard at too high a parity—and making no mention of some of the more harebrained schemes Churchill dreamt up in World War II, Johnson shows that he is prepared to criticize, at least on occasion. Thus he takes aim at Churchill's quixotic, last-ditch defense of the poisonous Edward the Abdicator, and at more serious, if lesser known, errors of judgment, such as the role that Churchill played in carelessly pushing 1920s Japan on a path that was eventually to transform the Japanese from allies into antagonists. There was, Churchill told the then–prime minister of Britain, not "the slightest chance" of a war with Japan in their lifetimes. The eerie intuitive sense that enabled him to be one of the first Englishmen to understand the true nature of both Nazism and Bolshevism was, this time, nowhere to be seen. Less than 20 years later, Singapore fell.

If Johnson has (for the most part) avoided the temptations of hero worship, he has an appreciation for the heroic qualities of Churchill's life.

But if Johnson has (for the most part) avoided the temptations of hero worship, he has an appreciation for the heroic qualities of Churchill's life. This is only underlined by the obvious pleasure he takes in demonstrating how far Churchill could stray from more conventional notions of how heroes should behave, perhaps most charmingly in the story of when, in 1946 and aged 17, Johnson (lucky fellow!) had the opportunity to ask the greatest of Britain's leaders to what he attributed his success in life: "Without pause or hesitation, he replied: 'Conservation of energy. Never stand up when you can sit down, and never sit down when you can lie down.' He then got into his limo." A seasoned veteran both of dusty, sand-blown imperial campaigns and of the mud of the Western Front, who had, as prime minister and aged nearly 70, to be dissuaded from showing up for the D-Day landings, Churchill was a warrior as much as he was a warlord, yet somehow I suspect this is not the sort of reply, self-deprecatory and sly, that an Achilles would have given.

What Achilles would have recognized, however, was Churchill's relentless pursuit of glory and fame. Along with his romantic ideal of nation, and his gargantuan appetite for excitement, it is as close as we can come to finding a key to understanding what drove this complex man. With the idea of an afterlife appearing as unlikely to Churchill (for all practical purposes an atheist, but in a very English way: he was, he once said, a buttress of the Church of England, "support[ing] it from the outside") as to the heroes of the *Iliad*, his achievements could be the only sure route to the immortality that he craved.

In bidding farewell to the outgoing Labour members of his wartime coalition, Churchill told them "the light of history will shine on all your helmets." To make sure that it shone on his, he became his own Homer. "Words," he had once remarked, "are the only things that last forever." The sole reward he requested for his services during the war was that a large quantity of Britain's wartime papers be classified as his personal property. By effectively gaining exclusive access to so much of the official record, he was able to be among the first to get in his word (or, more accurately, more than 2 million words) on the topic of the war; and so, aided by a dedicated team, he did. The six volumes of his *The Second World War* were to shape our understanding of the conflict for a generation, and in no small respect they still do. They also made Churchill a great deal of money ($50 million, at today's value, not including serialization rights), something that was never a small consideration for a man so skillful at turning ink into gold.

His account is highly partial and, even allowing for what was known at the time, it leaves out much of the story, but, as Johnson explains, "by giving his version of the greatest of all wars . . . he was fighting for his ultimate place in history. What was at stake was his status as hero. So he fought hard and took no prisoners. On the whole he won the war of words, as he had earlier won the war of deeds." But then, given Churchill's way with language, a talent so profound that there was a time when it seemed only his speeches stood between the island race and defeat, this could not have been an entirely unexpected result.

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And it's a mark of Johnson's sensitivity as a writer—and his keen eye for good material—how often he is prepared to let Churchill speak for himself. If there's a drawback to this biography it is that it doesn't contain much fresh detail for those already familiar with the story: The only two things new to me were the revelation that Churchill couldn't stand the sound of whistling (by contrast, Johnson relates that Hitler was "an expert and enthusiastic whistler: he could do the entire score of *The Merry Widow*, his favourite opera") and the claim that Churchill's liver, "inspected after his death, was found to be as perfect as a young child's," something that might suggest that this peripatetic and famously bibulous statesman regularly included Lourdes in his wanderings.

But this lack of new information, almost inevitable in a brief summary of a well-known life, is compensated for by the pleasure of rereading the quotations from Churchill, familiar, well-loved friends for the most part, that Johnson weaves through his text as the best of all guides to the man who first said them. There are the jokes, the asides, and, of course, extracts from those great, rolling, resonant speeches. To read them is to hear again that voice, a voice (in this case speaking on the threat to British India) capable of conjuring up imagery that has not yet lost its power to chill or, in what may be our own coming age of Western retreat, sound the alarm: "Greedy appetites have been excited and many itching fingers are stretching and scratching at the vast pillage of a derelict Empire."

And then there's this, from 1940, on the Anglo-American "special relationship": "The British Empire and the United States will have to be somewhat mixed up together in some of their affairs for mutual and general advantage. For my own part, looking out upon the future, I do not view the process with any misgivings. . . . No one can stop it. Like the Mississippi, it just keeps rolling along. Let it roll. Let it roll on full flood, inexorable, irresistible, benignant [regrettably, Johnson omits that splendid 'benignant'], to broader lands and better days."

If I admit that rereading those words in the age of the EU, of Gordon Brown, and of Barack Obama left me sad, I hope that you will understand. **NR**

Music

Three on Parade

JAY NORDLINGER

Musical personalities continually parade through New York, and we will look in on three of them: three personalities who recently paraded through. The first of them is a trip and a half: Aprile Millo, the American soprano. She is an old-fashioned diva, or at least she plays at being one. She is like a cartoonist's version of an opera soprano: grand, imperious, plump. She seems perpetually on the verge of crisis, just a moment away from breaking down, if she is not actually doing so. She is one of the great cancelers in the history of music. And emotional neediness is apparent.

There is this fact, too: Millo is a splendid soprano, when she has control of herself, especially in Verdi. And she boasts a sound all her own: large, darkish, and sometimes thrilling.

She is not one to give a recital, being a real opera creature. But she gave one, sort of, at the Rose Theater, which is in the Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center, which is not quite at Lincoln Center, but never mind. This was her New York recital debut, although she is a veteran: aged 51. I say it was "sort of" a recital, because, before she ever sang, she denied to the audience that she was engaged in a recital. She said she preferred to think of it as a "party," to which we were all invited, and the theater was her "living room."

It was a variety show, in a way. It had dancing. It had special guests, including Lynn Harrell, the cellist (whose late father, Mack, was a distinguished baritone). At one point, Millo introduced an audience member: Licia Albanese, who is really a veteran soprano, aged 96. In between her songs and arias, Millo cracked wise, and often hilariously, à la Bette Midler. For example, she used sheet music for some lieder. And, putting on her glasses, she said, "Critics always chide me for using music, but, trust me, my German is even worse without it." Throughout the evening, there were emotional pronouncements, as Millo would "dedicate" a song to a particular person, usually departed.

She has almost a cult following, people who scream and stand for her on her entrance. Is it all right to say that the Friends of Dorothy are also the Friends of Aprile? I mean zero judgment—certainly not a negative one—in this remark: It is simple reporting.

So, how did she sing? She was very nervous—as she admitted to the audience—especially at the beginning. But she warmed up and calmed down. Her voice is weaker and more tremulous than it was. But it is still an extraordinary voice, and she knows what to do with it. She has an innate musicality, which allows her to put over a song—although this musicality deserted her in those lieder, particularly in Brahms's "Von ewiger Liebe," which was disjointed.

THE MEDAL

Bear, would you like to see my purple heart?
Terrified, I followed Uncle Eddie up the stairs,
expecting to see—God knows, what hideous thing,
what awful hidden wound from the Great War.
He led me back into his dark bedroom—
shuttered, it had the feeling of a tomb,
where by his dresser, crouching on the floor,
he knelt and sliding out the bottom drawer
in silence, lifted out a small sealed box,
the way a priest removes the sacrament at Mass;
then opening the clasp for me to see,
too reverent for me to touch or anyone,
I saw with my child's terror overcome
inside: the ribboned face of Washington.

—RICHARD O'CONNELL

Frankly, it is hard to judge Aprile Millo in conventional terms. She is a performer apart, with significant talent and that outsize, outlandish personality. A keen observer of the scene, attending the "party," said something that struck me as right: "It's a shame that Aprile feels she has to play the diva. She is one, naturally."

Pierre-Laurent Aimard is a much different cat. He is a French pianist, born in 1957, known as a brain. He is a critic's darling, mainly because he has devoted much of his career to championing contemporary music. And, to critics, championing contemporary music is next to godliness. Aimard was a founding member of Pierre Boulez's Ensemble Intercontemporain. That is an extremely proud credential. In some ways, Aimard is the embodiment of PC in music.

Nonetheless, he has genuine gifts. He showed some of them at a recital in Alice Tully Hall, recently refurbished, and definitely at Lincoln Center. He emerged in that solid-black Mao shirt that has become standard apparel for concert artists. No tails or tuxes, please, we're all proles now. And he opened his program with a rarely played sonata of Mozart: that in D major, K. 284.

On balance, Aimard is a good Mozartean. He plays cleanly and phrases thoughtfully. Some passagework was ungainly, however, and Aimard tends to overdo punchiness. Also, he suffers some tightness of arms, which gets in the way of lyricism. Furthermore, there is something strangely—sometimes arrestingly—clinical about his playing: as though he were examining the music under a microscope.

After Mozart came a work by a friend of Aimard's, George Benjamin, an Englishman born in 1960. This was *Piano Figures*, a set of ten small pieces, or micropieces, with such names as "Spell," "Knots," and "Mosaic." They are dissonantly melodic, and they are little impressions. Though they did not leave much of an impression on me, they are intelligently crafted. Aimard interpreted them well, too, although it should be possible to accent without jabbing as much as this pianist was.

I might sound, too, a recurring complaint of mine: that performers too seldom memorize contemporary pieces, and might do those pieces the favor of memorizing them (as we do Mozart, for example). Aimard had sheet music and a page turner (also in black Mao shirt).

To begin the second half of the program, we had *Klavierstück IX* by the late Karlheinz Stockhausen, that "iconoclast," to use one of the nicest words applied to him. Before playing the piece, Aimard gave a little speech about it. Should music really need special pleading of this sort? In any case, Aimard played the piece—sort of an experiment in sound effects—with total dedication and conviction, which is the only way to play this music (and practically any music, really).

Just the other week, I was reviewing a recording of Beethoven's Diabelli Variations. And I was saying that we hardly ever hear this masterpiece in recital—likewise Beethoven's "Eroica" Variations and C-minor Variations. As though to fulfill a wish, Aimard closed his program with the "Eroica" Variations. And he did them justice, if sometimes rough justice. In all candor, you need a speck more technique than Aimard has to bring this work off with real panache. But the pianist's heart was in the right place, and his fingers mainly were too.

Then he offered a little encore—a Webern piece for children, at the end of which someone's cellphone bleeped (text?). Aimard scowled into the audience, and—relaxed as I usually am about these mishaps—I couldn't blame him.

Third of our personalities is Alisa Weilerstein, an American cellist. She is only 27—but she has been formidable for years. She began well, being the daughter of two respected musicians and teachers: Donald Weilerstein, a violinist, and Vivian Hornik Weilerstein, a pianist. Parents and daughter form the Weilerstein Trio (natch). Alisa has given several memorable performances in New York. In the 2006–07 season, she played the Elgar Cello Concerto with the New York Philharmonic, under Zubin Mehta. Some of us are still shaking our heads about that: the power, the soulfulness, the mastery.

And just recently, she gave three performances at Columbia University, her alma mater. (She graduated with a B.A. in Russian history.) These performances took place in the Philosophy Hall, and they took place on three consecutive noon hours. At each session, Weilerstein played one Bach cello suite. Bach wrote six of these, and Weilerstein played the first three. The suites form the heart, or the foundation, of the cello repertory. Indeed, it is worth playing the cello for these suites alone. All the noteworthy cellists since Casals have played them, and all have regarded the suites with reverence. Rostropovich played them all his life, but he waited until his sixties to record them.

I heard Weilerstein on her first noon hour, when she played the Suite No. 1 in G. She makes an excellent sound, either bright or dark, glowing or growling, depending on the musical need. You could argue with some of her interpretive choices (as you could argue with some of most anybody's): Weilerstein went in for some pauses or hesitations that I found questionable, but they were still defensible choices. Her ornamentation tended to be just right: not too showy, not too shy. And she understood the suite as a whole, unifying its six movements.

Mainly, she played with a great and obvious love of music—of this music and music in general. I have mentioned the reverence with which cellists regard these suites. It is important to treat them reverently but without fear—without too much awe. They are to be enjoyed, tucked into, plumbed. This, Weilerstein did with the Suite No. 1.

Let it be known that her technique was not immaculate on this occasion—far from it. I have never heard her so technically shaky. She emitted many squeaks, including one horrendous, sustained one in the Sarabande. But it did not especially matter: because Weilerstein's basic musicality carried the day. I was reminded that Horowitz used to miss notes in Clementi, which either astonished or reassured twelve-year-olds in the hall. And it pays to be reminded that life—real, in-the-flesh musical life—is not a studio recording.

A quick footnote about Weilerstein: She is a face-maker, when she plays, and usually this type of musician is no good. Weilerstein is an exception, and a big one.

In music, as in other fields, greatness can out early. When the violinist Hilary Hahn was in her teens—she just turned 30—many of us said, "She is first-rate now. Not precocious, not impressive, not promising—first-rate, period." In the past year or so, Yuja Wang, a Chinese pianist, has come on the scene. She is 22 and already commanding. And then there are two cellists, both born in 1982—Han-Na Chang, a Korean American, and Weilerstein. They are glorious 27-year-olds, but they were also glorious years ago. When you got it, why wait? **NR**

Film

No Surrender

ROSS DOUTHAT

I KNOW what I'm supposed to tell you about the outrageously successful *Twilight* movies—the second, *New Moon*, did $140 million in business in its first weekend alone—which sprang from the wildly successful *Twilight* books, which sprang in turn from the pen of one Stephenie Meyer, a cherubic Mormon mother of three. I'm supposed to say that whatever you think of the overwrought text, the subtext is a cultural conservative's dream. I'm supposed to talk about how the *Twilight* saga throws a supernatural cloak over a story that's explicitly pro-abstinence, pro-romance, pro-monogamy, and pro-marriage. I'm supposed to remark on how it took a series about a high-school girl who falls in love with a vampire to make chastity seem cool again.

Vampire, werewolf, and human

SUMMIT ENTERTAINMENT

I'm supposed to point out that even C. S. Lewis, the master of message-smuggling fantasy, would have never dreamed of repurposing the vampire—a Satanic figure in Bram Stoker, and lately a symbol of transgressive sexuality—as a kind of Christian romantic hero. Yet that's what the *Twilight* saga has done with Edward Cullen, a strenuously moral bloodsucker who battles his thirst for human blood like Saint Anthony wrestling with the devil, and regards the possibility of vampiric congress with his beloved Bella as a sin to be resolutely avoided—unless, that is, she agrees to be transformed not only into an immortal, but into his wife as well.

And then I'm supposed to chuckle, just a little, at the anxiety the saga has produced among adults who don't care for chastity, or Mormons, or young love that ends in early marriage, but find themselves drawn to the vampire romance even so. (From a *Washington Post* story on liberal feminists' attempts to justify their affection for the series: "Perhaps [Bella's] single-minded desire for a relationship is actually a Third Wave feminist expression? Maybe it doesn't matter that she's choosing Edward over everything else, as long as it's her choice? Maybe her wish to become a vampire is really a metaphor for asserting her rights over her own body?")

Consider all of this said. But now let me say something else: I don't care for it. Not because both the books and movies are badly written and melodramatic and all the rest of it. A good story covers a multitude of sins, especially on the big screen. No, I don't care for it because I can't reconcile myself to rooting for the lovely Bella to end up married to a vampire. Because—well, because he's a *vampire*.

I didn't realize that I harbored this species-ist objection while watching last year's adaptation of *Twilight*, the first installment in the saga. Directed by Catherine Hardwicke, the film had an enveloping, fairy-tale aesthetic—rolling fog banks, deep Cascadian forests, deer darting through the mists and ferns—and the frisson that came with knowing more than Bella, for a time at least, about the precise nature of her sunlight-averse love interest.

But *New Moon* was turned over to the hackish Chris Weitz, last seen butchering Philip Pullman's *The Golden Compass*, which means less enveloping mood and more plodding plot this time around. And the more plot there was, the more uncomfortable I felt—and the more time I spent sympathizing with everyone (Edward included, to his credit) who urges Bella to give up the love affair, keep her mortality, and never dally with a vampire again.

Not that Edward isn't impressively noble, impressively beautiful (he's played by Robert Pattinson, all cheekbones and ravaged eyes), and impressively conflicted about his species's way of life. But rooting for him to transform his mortal beloved (embodied by a slightly miscast Kristen Stewart, who's better suited to playing the hard-to-get cool girl than a passionate romantic) into an immortal bloodsucker still feels a little bit like rooting for a fairy to steal a child and spirit it away to Faerie. Sure, maybe the child will be happy; maybe he'll turn immortal himself; maybe he'll become a great lord in the land of Tír na nÓg. But you're still rooting for the fairy, and against the human race.

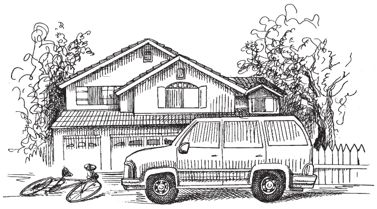
Meyer is smart enough to anticipate this reaction, which is why her story includes a mortal (though still magical) rival for our heroine's affections, the teenage werewolf Jacob (a musclebound Taylor Lautner), whose pursuit of Bella occupies a great deal of *New Moon*'s running time. I suppose I could just count myself as part of "Team Jacob," as a subset of the saga's fans have dubbed themselves, and leave it at that. But the poor lovestruck werewolf is obviously just a hairy foil for the elusive, sharp-toothed Edward, which makes joining his "team" about as much fun as pulling for the Washington Generals to upset the Harlem Globetrotters.

Except that at least the Globetrotters aren't undead creatures with a taste for human blood. Late in *New Moon*, Bella and Edward encounter the overlords of the vampire world, the Volturi, and narrowly escape with their lives. As they slip away from the Tuscan basilica where the Volturi make their home, a party of tourists enters, and you hear their helpless screams as the vampires make a meal of them.

It's one of the movie's few moments of authentic horror—but, more important, it's a reminder of what sort of creature we're romanticizing here. And pro-abstinence messages or no, I've had enough. You can call me a bigot, if you like, but I don't care how carefully Edward Cullen has trained himself to devour deer instead of human beings: I wouldn't let my daughter anywhere near him. And when the last *Twilight* movie rolls around, and the fatal bite is taken, I'll be the guy standing up in the back of the theater, shouting: Leave our women alone, vampire! **NR**

The Straggler

Machine Dreams



JOHN DERBYSHIRE

WHAT shall I do to be saved? Well, I might try uploading the contents of my brain to some more durable substrate. If I survive another 30 years, this will be a real option, according to Ray Kurzweil, leading light of the Singularity movement.

Singularitarians believe that galloping progress in computer technology and brain science will, quite soon, lead to computers as smart as ourselves. They further surmise that the understandings attained along the way will take us further, from AI (artificial intelligence) to AI+. Developments beyond that are unknowable, since we cannot second-guess the actions of such posthuman actors. And granted the premise that we can create super-brains, presumably *they* will be able to create super-super-brains, AI++, and so on, up an exponential curve leading to the Singularity, a state of superintelligence.

This is not, or not all, cultish crackpottery. Singularitarianism builds on ideas that have been around for decades. The tremendous genius John von Neumann prepared a series of lectures touching on the key ideas shortly before his death in 1957. Some very sober and respectable persons and institutions are lending support. Google, Inc., the world's largest Internet company, is involved; so is billionaire entrepreneur Peter Thiel (to whom nobody *ever* says: "If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?"); so are numerous departments and research institutes at prestigious universities. Some of the principals gathered at a Singularity Summit in New York City in October. I went along to see what they have to say.

Kurzweil himself gave one of the lectures. I found him more persuasive in person than in print, where he plods. He has been promoting the Singularity for 20 years, so his presentation is brisk and polished, and he has long since worked out ripostes to any objection anyone might come up with. (The current edition of his book *The Singularity Is Near* has a 60-page chapter responding to critics.) There were other solidly thoughtful addresses, along with some woollier stuff from the speculative fringes.

It is very fascinating to peer into a phenomenon like this, to observe high-IQ types giving free rein to their imaginations. Factions and schools of thought emerge. "Complementers" want super-smart gadgets with AI for particular tasks—self-driving automobiles, language translation, the modeling of climates and economies. "Substituters" seek AGI, artificial *general* intelligence—complete simulations of the human brain, able (after having lived some kind of social life, surely?) to be moved by poetry, see the point of jokes, and practice the Golden Rule. We also heard from the Methuselaritarians, who, while promising no super-brains, think the standard-issue item can be made to last indefinitely.

A key reason to attend any gathering of very bright people is of course the hope of stock tips. The closest we got at the Summit was Peter Thiel's arguing that the *non*-appearance of the Singularity will be very bad economic news. Humanity, Peter told us, is riding a technological bicycle which, if it does not keep moving—indeed, keep *accelerating*—will fall over. Well, well; where's the fun of futurology without a doom scenario? There were other dark speculations, not all serious. In a discussion of what super-minds might do once created, one wag suggested that, being rational, they might commit suicide—a rational act from several points of view, as philosophers have noted. It was decided that we had better equip the super-brains with a belief in hell.

I left the Singularity Summit impressed by the talent and imagination on display, and confident that gadgets of breathtaking capability lie in our near future. The dream of AI has, like some other mid-20th-century techno-dreams—fusion power, moon bases—seriously under-delivered so far, but it seems far from hopeless to me (albeit on some timescale much less optimistic than Ray Kurzweil's).

Of the possibility of transforming human nature, however, I remain a skeptic. One abiding impression left by events like the Singularity Summit is that the principals do not engage much with people of low to middling intelligence—which is to say, most people.

A day or two after I came home from the Summit, with visions of a posthuman future still dancing in my head, Mrs. Straggler sent me to our local discount department store to purchase a commonplace household object. The store stands next to a "low-income housing" project. Cruising the aisles, I got stuck behind a short, spherical woman pushing a shopping cart filled with cheap junk. As I edged past her, I heard that she was crooning softly to herself in Spanish. I suppose the song was some equivalent of the one sung by the prole woman Winston Smith watched from the window of his love nest in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:

> It was only an 'opeless fancy,
> It passed like an Ipril dye . . .

("The words of these songs," Orwell tells us, "were composed without any human intervention whatever on an instrument known as a versificator." Artificial intelligence? Machine creativity?)

While wishing my fellow Kmart shopper no harm at all, I could not help wondering what it would avail her if the dreams of the Singularitarians and Methuselaritarians were to be realized. A thousand years of life for her would be, what? A thousand years of watching TV game shows? Uploading her consciousness to microchips would lead to, what? An eternity of buying discount kitsch? Yet if these marvels come to pass—if they are not themselves 'opeless fancies—how, in a society as egalitarian and lawyered-up as ours, could they be denied to anyone? Thomas Jefferson declared it self-evident that we have a right to life, but omitted to say how much.

Late in his own life, Vladimir Nabokov explained why he was not curious to see his native Russia after decades of absence. He knew all too well what he would find there, said Vlad: "The wretched *muzhik* flogging his wretched mule with the same wretched zeal." Were I to be transported through time to the U.S.A. of the later 21st century, I am likewise sure that I would find the same globular woman murmuring the same vapid song with the same dull inattention in the aisles of some junk discount store. I look forward eagerly to self-driving cars; but, human-nature-wise, put me down as a Continuitarian. **NR**

Happy Warrior BY MARK STEYN

Rising Tide

THE Swiss minaret ban and the leaked climate e-mails are really the same story—or, more precisely, are symptoms of the same disease. In the *Times* of London, Oliver Kamm deplored the results of Switzerland's referendum, consigned it to the garbage can of right-wing populism, and for good measure dismissed my analysis of Euro-demographics ("This is nonsense," he pronounced magisterially). Instead, Mr. Kamm called for a "secularist and liberal defense of the principles of a pluralist society."

That's not the solution to the problem, but one of the causes. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for liberalism and pluralism and whatnot. And, in the hands of a combative old bruiser like Christopher Hitchens, they're powerful weapons. But most people are not like Mr. Hitchens. And so in much of the post-Christian West "a pluralist society" has subsided into a vast gaping nullity too weak to have any purchase on large numbers of the citizenry. In practice, the "secularist and liberal defense" is the vacuum in which a resurgent globalized Islam has incubated.

ALTRENDO TRAVEL/GETTY

It is only human to wish to belong to something larger than oneself, and thereby give one's life meaning. For most of history, this need was satisfied by tribe and then nation, and religion. But the Church is in steep decline in Europe, and the nation-state is all but wholly discredited as the font of racism, imperialism, and all the other ills. So some (not all) third-generation Britons of Pakistani descent look elsewhere for their identity, and find the new globalized Islam. And some (not all) 30th-generation Britons of old Anglo-Saxon stock also look elsewhere, and find global warming. "Think globally, act locally" works for environmentalism and jihad. Adherents of both causes are saving the planet from the same enemy—decadent capitalist infidels living empty consumerist lives. Both faiths claim their tenets are beyond discussion. Only another climate scientist can question the climate-science "consensus": You busboys and waitresses and accountants and software designers and astronomers and physicists and meteorologists are unqualified to enter the debate. Likewise, on Islam, for an unbeliever to express a view is "Islamophobic." As to which of these competing globalisms is less plausible, I leave it to readers: Barack Obama promises to lower the oceans; Hizb ut-Tahrir promises a global caliphate. The *Guardian*'s eco-palyptic Fred Pearce says Australia will be uninhabitable within a few years; Islam4UK says Britain will be under sharia within a few years. I'm not a betting man but if I had to choose . . .

"Think globally, act locally": but, if you're on the receiving end of globalized pathologies, it's very hard to act locally. A conventional if tyrannical nation-state is free to act against both Islam and "the environment." China is happy to stick it to the Uighurs and to turn the Yangtze into a frothing toxic cauldron. But these days non-tyrannical nation-states are barely nations at all, and certainly not to the extent of having anything so déclassé as a "national interest." If the Swiss are indeed the raging right-wing populists Oliver Kamm says they are, their knuckle-dragging neofascism is a limp and effete strain. If you truly believe that Islam is the cuckoo in your clock, you might ban new mosque construction or even Muslim immigration. Instead, they have banned a symbolic architectural flourish, while the mosque-building and the immigration continue—which means that one day the minaret ban will be overturned. And were the country a member of the European Union, even this forlorn gesture would not be permitted.

In Switzerland's defense, it was pointed out that Saudi Arabia prohibits not just church spires but churches. But this argument went nowhere, except to give detractors an opportunity to tut that the Swiss had chosen to become an Alpine Saudi. To progressive opinion, it's taken as read that "multiculturalism" is a one-way street: It seems entirely reasonable for a Wahhabist to say an Anglican church in Riyadh would seem, gee, I dunno, just somehow kinda un-Saudi, whereas it is entirely unacceptable for Heidi's grandfather to say a Deobandi mosque in Lucerne is un-Swiss. In contemporary Western discourse, a commitment to abstract virtues—secularism, pluralism—must trump any visceral sense of ethnocultural allegiance.

That's a very shifting patch of sand to draw a line in. Recently, the writer Barbara Kay testified to the House of Commons in Ottawa about a Jewish teacher at a francophone school in Ontario. Around 2002 she began to encounter explicitly anti-Semitic speech from Muslim students: "Does someone smell a Jew? It stinks here." "You are not human, you are a Jew." Had Anglo-Saxon skinheads essayed such jests, Oliver Kamm's warriors of secular pluralism would have crushed them like bugs. But when the teacher went to the principal, and the school board, and the local "hate-crimes unit," they all looked the other way and advised her that it would be easier if she retired. Sixty out of 75 French teachers at the school opted to leave: A couple were Jewish, a few more practicing Catholics, and most of the rest were the liberal secularists on whom Oliver Kamm's defense of the West rests. The francophone children withdrew, too. And now the principal and most of the students and faculty are Muslim.

Maybe it would have wound up like that anyway. But having nothing to stand in your way except liberal progressives certainly accelerated the process. And as it went at one schoolhouse, so will it go on the broader horizon: If you believe in everything, you're unlikely to stand for something. **NR**

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